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DAY BY DAY
DUTY
PLAIN SERMONS

H. J. WILMOT BUXTON



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Day by Day Duty.



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Day by Day Duty.

THIRTY PLAIN SERMONS

INCLUDING MANY FOR THE
PRINCIPAL CHURCH SEASONS.

BY THE REV.

H. J. WILMOT-BUXTON, M.A.,

AUTHOR OF "BIBLE OBJECT LESSONS," "COMMON LIFE RELIGION," "IN MANY
KEYS," "THE TREE OF LIFE," "WORDS BY THE WAY," "SUNDAY
LESSONS FOR DAILY LIFE," "BY WORD AND DEED," "THE
BATTLE OF LIFE," "THE CHILDREN'S BREAD,"
"THE LIFE OF DUTY," "MISSION SERMONS
FOR A YEAR," ETC., ETC.

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AT CLAREMONT
California

TO

THE REVEREND FRANK EMLYN JONES, M.A.,

VICAR OF GREAT TORRINGTON,

THESE SERMONS ARE DEDICATED.

Contents.

Advent.

	PAGE	
1.—THE DAY'S WORK	I	<i>Daily</i>
HEBREWS III. 13.		
"But exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day."		
2.—THE <u>DAILY</u> SACRIFICE	10	
ROMANS XII. 1.		
"I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God."		
3.—EVERY <u>MORNING</u>	19	
EXODUS XVI. 21.		
"They gathered it every morning."		
4.—LOOKING <u>BEYOND</u>	27	
PSALM CXXI. 1.		
"I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help."		

Christmas.

5.—WHAT <u>GOD</u> IS	36
PSALM CXLVII. 2, 3.	
"The Lord doth build up Jerusalem; He gathereth together the outcasts of Israel; He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds."	

of Contents.

Lent.

	PAGE
6.—THE PLAGUE SPOT	44
LEVITICUS XIV. 35.	
“It seemeth to me that there is, as it were, a plague in the house.”	
7.—THE DAY’S JOURNEY	53
I KINGS XIX. 4.	
“He himself went a day’s journey into the wilderness.”	
8.—DENYING CHRIST	62
S. JOHN XVIII. 17.	
“Then saith the damsel that kept the door unto Peter, Art not thou also one of this Man’s disciples? He saith, I am not.”	
9.—PARADISE LOST	71
GENESIS III. 1.	
“Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made.”	
10.—THE DAILY CROSS	80
S. LUKE IX. 23.	
“If any man will come after Me . . . let him take up his cross daily, and follow Me.”	

Easter-tide.

11.—CHANGE	88
I COR. XV. 51.	
“We shall all be changed.”	

Contents. 90

	PAGE
12.—CASTING THE NET	97

S. JOHN XXI. 3.

"Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee."

General.

13.—BETHEL	104
--------------------	-----

GENESIS XXVIII. 10.

"And Jacob went out from Beersheba, and went towards Haran."

14.—DAILY BREAD	112
-------------------------	-----

S. MATTHEW VI. 11.

"Give us this day our daily bread."

15.—DAILY PRAYER	120
--------------------------	-----

S. LUKE XI. 1.

"One of His disciples said unto Him, Lord, teach us to pray."

16.—DAILY PRAISE	129
--------------------------	-----

PSALM LXXII. 15.

"Daily shall He be praised."

17.—DAILY STRENGTH	138
----------------------------	-----

PHILIPPIANS IV. 13.

"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth Me."

18.—DAILY PROGRESS	147
----------------------------	-----

JOSHUA I. 6.

"Be strong, and of a good courage."

Contents.

	PAGE
19.—LIVING VOICES.. .. .	155
HEBREWS XI. 4. "He being dead, yet speaketh."	
20.—IN THE MORNING	164
EXODUS XXXIV. 2. "In the morning."	
21.—BEATITUDES	172
S. MATTHEW V. 3. "Blessed."	
22.—THE OTHER MARIES.	182
S. MATTHEW XXVIII. 1. "In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn towards the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre."	
23.—FAITHFUL WORKERS	191
2 CHRONICLES XXXIV. 12. "And the men did the work faithfully."	
24.—OLD WELLS	199
GENESIS XXVI. 18. "And Isaac digged again the wells of water which they had digged in the days of Abraham his father, for the Philistines had stopped them after the death of Abraham; and he called their names after the names by which his father had called them."	
25.—THOROUGHNESS	207
ECCLESIASTES IX. 10. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might."	

Contents. ~~So~~

	PAGE
26.—NOT NOW, BUT HEREAFTER	216

S. JOHN XIII. 7.

"Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter."

27.—TALENTS	225
---------------------	-----

S. MATTHEW XXV. 14.

"The Kingdom of Heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods."

28.—GOD'S MESSAGE	234
---------------------------	-----

2 TIMOTHY III. 16.

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."

29.—THE GOSPEL OF CHEERFULNESS	243
--	-----

ECCLESIASTES III. 4.

"A time to laugh."

Harvest Festival.

30.—LABOUR AND REST	251
-----------------------------	-----

LEVITICUS XXV. 3, 4.

"Six years thou shalt sow thy field, and six years thou shalt prune thy vineyard, and gather in the fruit thereof, but in the seventh year shall be a Sabbath of rest unto the land, a Sabbath for the Lord."

Day by Day Duty.


Sermon I.

THE DAY'S WORK.

(Advent.)

HEBREWS III. 13.

"But exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day."

 WANT you to fit your thoughts upon that word *daily*. I do not know how many times it occurs in the Bible, but we find it over and over again. God's dealing with us is a daily matter. Our life and our work are given out by the day. It is to-day's bread, to-day's work, to-day's cross, to-day's temptation, to-day's prayer, to-day's battle. The Bible does not talk about to-morrow, it tells us that sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. Those who plan and scheme and fret about to-morrow often neglect the duties of to-day. When I was a boy at school I did as most boys do, I kept an almanack, and marked off a day

❖ The Day's Work.

every evening, knowing that I was one day nearer home and the holidays. We should live our whole life in that way ; there comes each day's duty, work, pleasure, sorrow, and at night we can feel that we are one day nearer home, our Father's House.

A man says to me—I am going to do something next week ; I answer—Never mind next week, do your duty now. I say to a workman—I engage you by the *day*. That is what God says to us all. He gives us to-day's burden, and to-day's work only, and tells us that as our day so shall our strength be. If your way of life is harder than mine, then God will give you more strength than he has given me.

Let us look at the subject in this way. First, *life is a daily fighting*. There is no discharge in the Christian warfare, no peace can ever be signed on this side of the grave. When our troops were besieging Sebastopol the bugles rang out daily, and daily the Russian guns boomed, there was fighting of some sort daily. So it is with us all. Our enemies would daily swallow us up, for there be many that fight against us. You say, perhaps—I see no enemy. Then there is all the more danger. In the South African war our soldiers seldom saw the Boers, who were hidden in the hills, but they went down before the bullets of their unseen foe. The

The Day's Work. 50

worst enemy is an invisible one. Satan hides when he strikes the most deadly blow. He puts secret thoughts into our minds which wound and hurt the soul. The enemy who fights in the dark is the most dangerous. "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." The enemies of our soul are a great host which no man can number, so we must fight every day.

I have read of a young officer who in his first battle felt a desperate impulse to run away. He looked at his men, mostly raw recruits, and saw that they wanted to do just the same. If he failed, they would fail. So he turned his face to the foe, and urged his men to be firm and brave. So we must quit ourselves like men, and fight our battle every day, for the sake of others as well as ourselves. I know that we all want to run away sometimes ; our enemies are too strong for us, they live and are mighty, our besetting sin clings to us and pulls us down. Then let us remember that we are not fighting alone ; though there are giants in the way, giants of lust and greed, and selfishness and sloth, let us remember God's word, "Dread not, neither be afraid of them, the Lord thy God, Who goeth before thee, He shall fight for you."

• The Day's Work.

Next, *life should be a daily watching*. "Blessed is the man who heareth Me, watching daily at My gates." You see, life is still a *daily* business. Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. That is the reason of our daily service in Church; it is the daily watching at the gates of God, the daily hearing of His Word. That is the meaning of our daily prayer in private, or with our family, we are watching, getting ready for the enemy, sharpening our weapons, buckling on our armour. Most of the disasters in the Boer war were caused by want of watching. The enemy crept out unseen, surrounded our troops, and took them prisoners. So the devil's temptation comes to us when we are off our guard. David was not watching when he fell into his great sin; S. Peter was not watching when he denied, neither was Judas when he betrayed his Master. You were not watching, brethren, when you lost your temper, or swore that oath, or did that mean act. I would say to all, watch, especially against small, secret sins. You can see the lion coming, but not the snake in the grass, or the moth in the garment. You may see a great danger, a giant sin, a monster temptation, but miss the fatal fault which is eating away your spiritual life. You can see the fire in the grate, but not the tiny spark hidden among the straw. What I say unto you, I say unto all—

The Day's Work.

Watch. Watch to-day, to-morrow the watch may be over, to-day is yours, to-morrow is God's.

Next, *life is a daily bearing of our burden.* Jesus says, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me." Still the idea is one of living for the day. We all have our burdens, and we could not carry them all at once, the burden of life would crush us. But it is given to us a little at a time, day by day. We have not to bear to-morrow's burden, but to-day's; strength is not given us beforehand for to-morrow's battle, but for to-day's. God serves out our load, and strength to carry it, daily. Have you ever watched men harnessing the horses in a great London stable for the day's work? Each horse receives his collar and harness for the day's work, no more. So every morning God puts His yoke upon us, He lays a cross or a burden upon us, and says—Go, work in My vineyard to-day, and take no thought for the morrow. Every man has his work to do, and his burden to carry, life means work and weight-carrying, not the soft hands of idleness. If you want the water of success, you must smite the rock of difficulty; if you want the water of life, you must smite the Rock of Ages with prayer.

The flowers of victory and the flowers of holi-

✿ The Day's Work.

ness always grow at the top of the hill, and we must climb for them. God always makes our shoulder equal to the burden. When the battle comes the sword is ready for us, when the darkness of sorrow falls the light of comfort shines, just as God shows us the stars when the night comes. In the tropical forests there grow many poisonous plants, but side by side with them grows another plant which cures the evil. So with the bitter cup of trial, God brings the healing cup of grace; every cloud has its bright side, and every Gethsemane its comforting angel. If we only bear our cross after Jesus we shall always have our daily bread and our daily strength.

"Be earnest then, in thought and deed,
Nor fear approaching night,
Calm comes with evening light,
And hope, and peace. Thy duty heed to-day."

Yes, life means the bearing of our burden daily. Nothing worth having is easy, it must be worked for, struggled for, suffered for. An idle life is not life at all, the true life means drudgery, bearing the burden. For the child there is the drudgery of school, for the grown man there is the drudgery of work; day by day there is the same round, the same yoke, the same burden. Daily the hour strikes, telling us that man goeth forth to his work and to

The Day's Work. 50

his labour until the evening. There is the field to till, the machinery to guide, the accounts to balance, the shop to serve, the office to attend, the book to write. It is always the burden to be borne, always drudgery if we would live. If you would get fire from the flint you must strike hard, if you would get gold from the mine you must dig deep. There is always the burden, and it is good for us; the horse in harness goes steadily to work, the horse free is wild and dangerous. So the man in harness, busy at his work, is useful, the idler is worthless and harmful. Bearing the burden makes us true men, shapes us, forms our character. You look at some beautiful ornament, fit for the king's palace, and priceless in value. Once it was common clay, but it went through the mill, it was shaped on the potter's wheel, it was burnt in the fire, and now it is a thing of beauty. So is it with us all. We are only common clay, but we are ground in God's mills, shaped by God's Hand, passed through the fire of affliction, until we become beautiful and useful in our lives.

All our burdens, our sorrows, are sent to make us good men and women. Some one says, "It never gets easy to be good, every morning the cross lies at our feet, and daily must it be taken up and carried, if we would follow Christ." Every day

of The Day's Work.

a man has to go to his work and bear his burden, every day a man has to bear his cross, his grief, his disappointment, his loss, his worry. Every day a man has to fight against difficulties, obstacles, to take his place in the great grim battle of life, trade life, professional life, business life. Every day also he has to fight a spiritual battle. The world, the flesh, and the devil are always on the war path, and shoot out their arrows, even bitter tempers, evil lusts, vile wishes. A Christian man's armour must never be put off, his hand must always cleave to the sword.

Brethren, you had to fight with the devil yesterday, you have got to fight with him to-day. Our enemies are daily fighting and troubling us, and if we are not fighting there is no true life in us. Your body could not live many minutes without breath, your spiritual life cannot live without prayer. The Psalmist says, "Be merciful unto me, O Lord, for I cry daily unto Thee." It is still the same idea of *daily*. "I cry unto Thee daily." True prayer is always a cry, not a drowsy whisper, a sleepy murmur, but the cry of one in sore need. "Lord, save me, I perish; have mercy upon me, O Lord; blot out all mine offences." Go on, dear souls, daily fighting, daily watching, daily bearing your cross, and running the race set before you, praying always,

The Day's Work.

till the day comes when they will say of you and me—

“Now the labourer's task is o'er,
Now the battle day is past,
Now upon the farther shore,
Lands the voyager at last,”

in that land where the angel trumpets sound eternal truce, and we shall find peace, the peace of God which passeth all understanding.

Sermon II.

THE DAILY SACRIFICE.

(Advent.)

ROMANS XII. 1.

"I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God."



SACRIFICE was the central point of the Jewish religion. We find it all through the Old Testament; from the very beginning lambs and other victims were offered, and in the Temple there was the daily sacrifice. All these things pointed to the coming of Jesus, and when He came, and offered Himself as the one perfect sacrifice on the altar of the Cross, all the other sacrifices ended. By His Precious Blood He purchased to Himself a universal Church, to which we all belong, and sacrifice is also the central point of the Christian Church. We are not bidden to offer lambs and bulls, but ourselves, and we are commanded to present a daily sacrifice of self upon

The Daily Sacrifice. 50

the great altar of duty. Our Lord tells us, "If any man would follow Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily." He teaches us that whosoever loseth his life for Christ's sake shall find it. The sacrifice of something for the good of others is a universal law. (The wheat must be crushed and ground before it is fit for the food of man. The oil must be consumed to give us light, the quartz must be broken up to give us gold. The grapes must be crushed to provide wine, the diamond must be cut and polished to shine in the crown. The leaf is bruised to give forth its sweetness, animals die that men may live, men die to benefit their country. The silver which shines upon your table has been through the refiner's fire. So it is with us all, if we are worth anything we have been purified, we have been through the fire, through the mills of God.

Have you ever seen a forester cutting down a great tree? It falls to earth, never to rise again; there will be no more shade or beauty, no more glory of summer green or autumn gold. Is the tree wasted? No it is sacrificed. One day a brave ship sails the seas; to build it the tree was sacrificed. One day God's Church rises towards Heaven, to form the roof the tree was sacrificed. Have you even seen men quarrying stone? It is torn out of

❧ The Daily Sacrifice.

the quarry, and split and shattered, and carved and cut, and chiselled and hammered ; one day we see the walls of a stately Cathedral, and there is the stone which was sacrificed. You watch a sculptor carving the marble, the white fragments fall thickly, the marble wastes, but the beautiful image grows ; it is not waste, but sacrifice. Was Mary's ointment wasted ? No, the world has been sweeter for it ever since. Was Gordon's life wasted when he died at Khartoum, or Nelson's when he fell at Trafalgar ? Many a brave soldier lies under the African veldt, cut down by the Boer bullets, but their lives were not wasted, they were sacrificed to duty, to the honour and glory of England. Many a devoted missionary, many brave men and delicate women, have died of fever and savage torture, and the world says—To what purpose was this waste ? But theirs was a sacrifice to win souls. To some people the crucifixion of our Master seems a waste of life ; to the Church it is the greatest sacrifice, which taketh away the sins of the world. "He that loseth his life shall find it."

"Herein is love, to strip the shoulder bare,
If need be, that a frailer one may wear
A mantle to protect it from the storm ;
To bear the frost-king's breath, so one be warm,
To crush the tears it would be sweet to shed,
And smile that others may have joy instead."

The Daily Sacrifice. 50

[There was a terrible explosion once in one of our coal-mines, and the frightened miners came rushing wildly to certain death. The only chance of safety lay in another part of the mine, and one man only among them knew this. He stood in the way, guiding the men, and when urged to escape himself, he answered, "No, someone must stay here to guide the others." Yes, that is the point, we must stand at our post, suffer, sacrifice ourselves, die, it may be, to guide the others. "He that loseth his life shall find it."]

Of course, great acts of self-sacrifice are not frequently required, there is only one Calvary in a man's life; but as life means a daily battle, a daily watch, a daily bearing of the burden, so it means a daily sacrifice. No one has learnt what true life means till he has learnt to sacrifice himself. The world talks about the blessedness of getting, God's servant talks of the blessing of giving up.

"Pleasant food and garb of pride
Put for conscience sake aside,
Lawful luxury foregone
To relieve some little one
Loved of Christ, by Him befriended,
And for His dear sake attended,
On Thine altar laid we leave them,
Christ present them, God receive them."

Here, in Church, you point to the East end, and

as The Daily Sacrifice.

say—There is the Altar. But every Christian home should have an altar; every workshop, or place of business, or market should have an altar, where men offer the daily sacrifice of righteousness. All you are, and all you have should be consecrated to God's service, because you are not your own. The gold, when it lay undiscovered in Australia, was anyone's; the gold coined and minted is the king's, and may not be defaced. We bear the King's stamp upon us, the sign of the Cross. No matter what we are, preachers, teachers, writers, mechanics, labourers, traders, as baptized Christians we are God's coinage, and we must consecrate ourselves and our work on the altar of God's service. Our whole life, body, soul, and spirit, must be a sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God. The little child in the nursery, or learning at school, must have its little altar, and lay its little life and work and play upon it. Every little child should be as Samuel, consecrated to God.

Is your work in a kitchen? Set up an altar there, consecrate the common work of common life to Jesus; pray about it, be honest and upright and thorough in it, as unto the Lord, and not unto men. Is your work in a palace? Set up an altar there, lay your wealth, your rank, your power upon it, and account to God for every penny of your money, it is given you in trust, consecrate it. Is your work

The Daily Sacrifice.

in a cottage? Set up an altar there, consecrate your poverty, give gladly of your little. Is your work poor and common? Lay it on God's altar, and it will be holy, acceptable to God. We talk of going to Divine Service in Church; all our life and work should be divine service, we should set up an altar, and offer the sacrifice daily. What we all have to learn is to consecrate our common life, to understand that we must be as near to God in Monday's work as in Sunday's worship. We bring our offerings to the altar in Church to-day, let us offer our work, our life, ourselves on the altar of home or workshop to-morrow and everyday. The example of Jesus shows us what our home life should be, a working life, lived in the atmosphere of holiness. Every Christian home should be like that home at Nazareth; every workplace should be like that carpenter's shop in Galilee. (Brethren, set up an altar, and offer the daily sacrifices. What must you offer?

1. An offering of *daily praise and thanksgiving*.

"Holy off'rings rich and rare,
Offerings of praise and prayer,
Purer life and purpose high,
Clasped hands, uplifted eye,
Lowly acts of adoration
To the God of our salvation,
On His altar laid we leave them,
Christ present them, God receive them."

of The Daily Sacrifice.

So many lives among us are miserable because there is no praise, no thanksgiving in them. As soon as the day breaks the birds sing, why do not we? Let your praises and thanksgivings go up as the incense, offer your daily sacrifice, say—Praise the Lord, O my soul. Some people are always murmuring, and have no room for praise and thankfulness. One looks on a beautiful scene unmoved; another cries—How beautiful is God's world; how good God is. Some people look at everything through their tears, and all looks wet and blurred. Others look at life through the sunshine of cheerfulness, and see nothing but sunshine. Praise God, and be cheerful, that is the secret of happiness. It has been said that a merry heart is a continual feast to others beside itself. They tell us that the sunny presence of Florence Nightingale in the Crimean hospitals cured more than her medicines. Praise God, and be good to your neighbour, and you will never find life sad.

"All places that the eye of Heaven visits,
Are to the wise man ports and happy havens."

2. Let your *daily sacrifice be an offering of your daily work*. No matter how dull and common it may be, sanctify it, lay it on God's altar. He Who accepts the widow's mite and the baby's prayer will

The Daily Sacrifice. 50

accept your offering. So shall your life be consecrated as divine service. A man should be as close to God when he handles a hammer as when he kneels at the altar. "Let the devil always find you busy," said the saint of old ; if he finds you working hard in a godly spirit he is powerless to harm you. You say, perhaps, that your work is dull and monotonous, never mind. You have seen a road-mender at his work. Day after day he is busy breaking stones by the roadside ; very dull work, you say ; but remember, in time, the road-mender makes a road for the king's carriage to pass over, or for the feet of those who hasten on errands of mercy and love. Our work may be very dull, but it is blessed if it has been laid on God's altar. It may be slow work, like that of the road-mender, but it makes a road. All good work is done slowly. When you first begin to climb the Swiss mountains the guide says—Go slowly and steadily, and you will reach the top all the sooner. So it is with our work ; climb slowly, work steadily, a day at a time, always upward, looking up to God, and you will reach the top.

3. Above all, let your daily sacrifice *be one of self*, of giving up your own way, of self-denial for the sake of others. We can offer that daily sacrifice in a thousand different forms. By doing our

❧ The Daily Sacrifice.

duty, our work, though it may be dull, and even unpleasant. By patiently bearing with unkind tempers, and unjust judgments. Husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters, can offer themselves a daily sacrifice. We need not look afar off for some great opportunity of self-sacrifice, look at home, at your daily life and work. Every home has its altar, where we may offer ourselves a sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God.

"The trivial round, the common task,
Will furnish all we need to ask,
Room to deny ourselves, a road
To bring us daily nearer God."

Sermon III.

EVERY MORNING.

(Advent.)

EXODUS XVI. 21.

“They gathered it every morning.”



OD gives us certain blessings, and we owe Him certain duties, every morning. Israel gathered the manna every morning, just enough for one day. If they gathered more it became corrupt, and unfit for food. This was to teach Israel to trust God for each day, to show them their daily dependence upon Him. So with us, we are taught to ask God to give us our bread day by day, not to-morrow's bread, or next week's, but to-day's. So many of us are troubled and unhappy because we are living for to-morrow, next year, the future. We have got to live day by day, a day at a time; to-morrow or next year are nothing to us, to-day is everything. We cannot eat

§ Every Morning.

bread enough for two days, so we must live to-day, and trust God for to-morrow. If we are fretting about the future we do not trust God ; did He not give us bread to-day ? Then trust Him for to-morrow.

“ They gathered the manna every morning ” because God provided it. But Israel had something to do, they gathered it. God does not help idle people. Israel could not make the manna, but they could gather it. It is the same in our own case ; God gives us daily bread every morning, He drops blessings upon us like the manna, and we must gather them every morning. Every morning brings its work, its duty, its task, its service, we must go forth to our work and our labour till the evening. Then we shall get our daily bread, we shall gather manna, and feel that we are God’s day labourers. “ Dwell in the land, and be doing good, and verily thou shalt be fed.” We shall not only gather manna for the body, bread for our mouths, but bread for the soul, spiritual manna, the blessings of the Holy Spirit, these we must gather every morning on our knees.

Again, we read in the Bible, “ Thou visitest him every morning, and in the morning thou shalt see the glory of God.” God is with us every morning, though your eyes are too heavy and dull to see Him,

Every Morning.

yet He is there. As the loving mother draws back the curtains of her child's bed in the morning, and the little one sees the dear face looking down on him, so God is about our path and about our bed. "Thou visitest him every morning." Happy is the man who begins every morning with God. As the morning is the most fresh and beautiful part of day, so should it be of our life, because then God visits us. Can you doubt it? Draw back your curtain in the morning and look forth. Who lighted up the scene, to brighten and make all beautiful? It has been said, "Morning is meant to be a Gospel to us, news from a better land, a call from our eternal home." God is very near to us in the morning. Israel was told, "Every morning ye shall see the glory of the Lord." They looked on the cloudy pillar, which was their guide, and saw the glory of the Lord flash forth. Look out of your window in the morning on God's beautiful world, and on the glory of the Lord in the morning. The sun, blazing among the cloudy pillars of the sky, the dew sparkling like jewels on the grass and leaves, the scent of flowers ascending like clouds of incense, God's birds singing in God's choir their morning hymn of praise, all these show you the glory of the Lord in the morning. And what part have we in all this? David tells us, "My voice

Every Morning.

shalt Thou hear in the morning, O Lord, in the morning will I direct my prayer unto Thee, and will look." Consecrate your tongue to God the first thing in the morning, let God be the first person to whom you speak, draw near God's throne before you draw near the world and its work. Begin the day with God, a day begun with prayer ends with a blessing. And do this every morning; Israel could not gather manna sufficient for two days, neither can you pray for two days. Life is a daily business, and we must pray for the life of the soul every morning.

"My voice shalt Thou hear in the morning." Did God hear your voice this morning, or are you not on speaking terms with Him? "In the morning I will direct my prayer unto Thee, and will look up." That is the right way to look. Some people are always looking down, down into their troubles and cares, down into the dark cellar which holds their worries, down into the money bag, or the grave, or dust and ashes. Brethren, look up, and see the glory of God, see God's Heaven, God's love, and care, and blessing, shining down upon you. Look up from the dust of earth, always look up.

Again, we read, "Bring your sacrifice every morning, and ye shall burn incense every morning." You see, it is always the same idea of day by day

Every Morning. 50

religion, daily bread, daily prayer, daily sacrifice. God gives us new life, new hope, new strength, new courage every morning, and we should offer new love, new praise, new sacrifice. Our prayers and praises and thanksgivings should go up as the incense, then we should be burning incense every morning. It is what we owe to God, as His soldiers. A soldier goes on duty, and wears his arms, and does what is required of him every morning, because it is due from him. We, as God's soldiers and servants, have certain things to do because we owe them to Him. The members of a family have certain duties to perform. The father expects to see them, and receive their greeting, every morning. We are God's children, and He expects to see us greet Him, that is, praise Him, every morning. This is the true meaning of Church-going, it is not a visit to be paid occasionally, but regularly. The Church is God's House, and He expects to see His children there, a united family, the Father waits there for them with a kiss of welcome and a blessing. The whole idea of worship is not one of getting, but of giving, doing daily honour to our Father, bringing our sacrifice every morning. We say to an earthly father—Good morning, father, and we expect his kiss. We ought first to speak

☞ Every Morning.

to our Heavenly Father, and receive His kiss, the kiss of peace.

“Bring your sacrifice every morning.” A sacrifice requires an altar. The chief altar is, of course, in Church, but there should be an altar in every home. I once celebrated the Blessed Sacrament with a dying miner in a Lancashire cottage, and the only altar was a broken bedroom chair, but it was God’s altar all the same. The place where you kneel in private prayer, the place where the family assembles for worship, is an altar. Bring your sacrifice ; what kind of sacrifice, what does God require? The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit—a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise. Offer the sacrifice of repentance every morning, for we have all so much to repent of. The Publican’s words, “Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner,” should always be on our lips. So many sins are never forgiven, because they have never been repented of. Remember every morning what you have done wrong, and what your duty you have left undone ; the wrong acts and words and thoughts. Come to God as David came in the fifty-first Psalm, crying, “Have mercy upon me” ; bring your sacrifice every morning. You see, it is a daily matter ; we sin every day, and we must repent every day. Every morning God pardons us, if we bring the sacrifice of penitence every morning.

Every Morning. So

Again, we read that Jacob awaked out of sleep in the morning, and said, "Surely God was in this place, and I knew it not." God is ever close to us, but some of us know it not, because we are asleep and dreaming, dreaming the world's foolish dreams of money, and pleasure, and ambition, and success. God is in the place, and we know it not, so there is no praise, no prayer, no Communion. God is directing our life, and we know it not, God sends us sorrows for our soul's good, and we know not that it is God. For all of us it is high time to awake out of sleep, to cast away the dreams of darkness, to know that God is with us, guiding and directing our way. "When I am awake I am still with Thee." Waking or sleeping, God is there; when we pass through trouble, losses, when the foundations of the world seem out of course, still we can say—I am still with Thee. He who is with God cannot be poor, or lonely, or weak, or hopeless.

"In the darkness of the night,
In the thickest of the fight,
When every friend is out of sight
I am still with thee.

In the agony of care,
In the midnight of despair,
I have yet the gift of prayer,
I am still with thee."

✻ Every Morning.

Then, the last morning. "When the morning was come, Jesus stood on the shore." Jesus and morning; how sweetly those two words go together. Night and sorrow, night and darkness, night and fear; morning and hope, morning and joy, morning and Jesus. The voyager over the wild seas trembles in the darkness, but morning brings happiness, there lies the shore where he would be, and there are friends waiting for him. We, brethren, are all out on the waves of this troublesome world, life is full of dangers, trials, temptations, we are often in the darkness of doubt and anxiety. Let us look forward, for the morning cometh, the morning without clouds. It is dark now, and the waters seem to go over our soul, but the light is yonder, the shore is yonder, and Jesus stands on the shore—Morning and Jesus.

Sermon IV.

LOOKING BEYOND.

(Advent.)

PSALM CXXI. 1.

"I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help."



HERE is a hymn which we sing sometimes in the Children's Service which runs thus:—

"Looking upward every day,
Sunshine on our faces,
Journeying onward every day,
To the heavenly places."

It is a good thing to look up, and to look forward. The lower animals look down, to their grass or provender, man should look up, to God and Heaven, to the hills from whence cometh his help. The Greek word for a man means one who looks upwards. I have read of a woman who worked

Looking Beyond.

hard with her pen, and at last found her eyes troubling her. The oculist whom she consulted told her that her eyes needed rest and change. From the windows of her home there was a grand view of some distant hills, and the doctor told her, when her eyes were tired with work, to look out of the window and gaze on the distant hills. Brethren, it is good for us all to look out of the window sometimes. If we are always looking at the rooms where we live, the shop where we trade, the farm or the counting house, we grow to think there is nothing else. Our little bit of ground is all this world and the next, we never see anything beyond our own handiwork, we are blind to all else, like the horse in the coal-mine.

There are times when we all grow weary of the treadmill of life, the daily task, the daily burden, the daily round of vexation or care. We want something better to think of than this little life, with its sins, and failures, and mistakes, its stupid tempers, its feeble efforts, its frequent falls and blunders. We want to look at something greater, wider, nobler. Then it is good to look out of the window on God's works, the sky and its millions of shining worlds, and to think—There is my home, if I but persevere. There is a place for me in God's House of many mansions, there is room for me in that

Looking Beyond.

infinite space, room for all. Brethren, look up from the mill of work, the money-grabbing, the buying and the selling, look up sometimes to God's Heaven, and feel—What is man, that Thou art mindful of him, and the son of man, that Thou so regardest him? Try to look up daily, get a wider view than your own backyard, your own little, petty work and life, look up to God, up to Heaven. Look away from this narrow world, and look up, and you will learn many things.

First, you will learn that this life is not all, but only the beginning, that our life means more than threescore years and ten. Our life means eternity ; we have an immortal soul, something which cannot die or end. Here we are like children growing up in school, and learning lessons daily ; we come of age only when we pass away from school, that is, from this world, and men say we die. But death is not the end, it is only the door by which we enter into a larger, wider, higher life, when we go out of our apprenticeship. Here we are only learning to live and to work ; the longest earthly life is very short, very incomplete. Everyone at death leaves something unfinished, some letter half written, some field half tilled, some book half read. Look up, and see the great future stretching before you, this is the day of small things, hereafter is the day of

Looking Beyond.

great things. No one ever did all he wanted to do in this life, we are only beginners.

"So many worlds, so much to do,
So little done, such things to be."

All this points to something beyond, and accounts for what we call failure. Some one is cut off in the midst of his work, a useful life is closed here, and we say—What great things he would have done if he had lived. Well, he is going to do great things somewhere else, God has more workshops than one, more worlds than this. The mole and the earth worm think there is no world beyond the dark tunnel which they make, and many men and women seem to think the same. We must not try to shut God and life into our little tunnels, our shop, or business. God and immortality have no limits. You say, I am going to die; God says, you are going to live for ever.

Some people only see the world from their own front door. Learn to look up, up to the hills of God, and remember you are immortal, and your acts are immortal. Every act of ours is a seed, every good act is a precious seed for a glorious harvest, every bad deed is a poisonous thing, to hurt and wound. All harvests are not gathered at once, there is not time in our short life for that. The evil deeds

Looking Beyond. 50

done, the bad books written long ago, are only beginning to hurt people to-day. It took ages of cruel oppression and injustice in France to produce the French Revolution. Many harvests are never gathered at all in this world. Men do good acts, and never see the fruit of them; men sow good seed, and gather no harvest; men do evil, and escape punishment here. Jesus Christ sowed the seed of eternal life for men, and what was His harvest here, a Cross. S. Stephen, and all the martyrs, sowed the seed of the Gospel, and their only harvest here was one of blood. But this world is not all, they who sowed in tears shall reap in joy, they gathered no sheaves here, but a glorious harvest ripens for them through eternity.

Again, if we look up, and forward, we shall learn the meaning of our sorrows and failures. We are tempted to say sometimes—Why was I ever sent into this world at all, it is such a hard fight, such a bitter struggle? Think of the invalid who is too weak to work and enjoy life. Think of our own failures, what tears, what struggles, what prayers we have known, and yet we never seem to succeed, whilst the careless and godless flourish like a green bay-tree. The honest man starves, and the hypocrite waxes rich, the prosperous sinner sits in high places, and the humble saint is left to perish. Why

Looking Beyond.

is it? Because this world is not all ; if it were, then it would be hard, and unjust, and cruel. But there is another and a wider life, where there are compensations, and rewards, and a righting of all wrongs. Dives in the parable lived a selfish and useless life, yet he prospered, and had his good things. Lazarus lived humbly and patiently, yet he suffered ; but afterwards the tables were turned, and each had his deserts. Selfish indulgence reaped a harvest of lonely misery, patient resignation a harvest of peace and rest. So it is with us all, the harvest comes in the next life, the sowing is now. Over every good life and every evil life the sentence is written—Now he is comforted, thou art tormented.

Then looking upward helps us to bear our sorrows. Some people, in their hour of trouble, shut the window, and draw down the blind, and sit and weep in the dark. That is not the right way ; open the window, and let in God's sunshine, look out on God's love, God's beautiful world, and think—There is something better waiting for me over yonder.

"I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help." The valley may be dark, but there is sunshine on the hills, Jesus is waiting there to wipe away all tears. Do not ask—Why does God send me these sorrows? but

Looking Beyond. 50

rather—What lessons are they meant to teach me? “Life’s sweetest roses are often plucked with bleeding fingers.” The bitterest sorrows bring the sweetest flowers of resignation. Some of us are condemned to lie on a sick bed for years, always suffering, and people say we have seen our best days. No, our best days are to come, one moment of eternity will compensate for all.

One of the greatest of musical composers was deaf, and could not hear his own exquisite music; when he was dying he said, “I shall hear in Heaven.” Milton was blind, but he sees Paradise regained now more clearly than ever. Some of us are too lame to walk a yard here, but one day we shall walk in the House of the Lord for ever, there are no cripples in that Bethesda.

Again, if we look upward and forward we shall understand that our departed friends are not dead, but living, not lost, but waiting. Here we look for them, and see only the empty chair, and the silent room, the child’s broken toy, and the book once touched by a vanished hand, or the faded picture. Or we look into the Churchyard, and see the grass springing on a grave, and a name on a tombstone. But that is not the right place to look at. Look up to Heaven, what belongs to God cannot die. Our dear ones live, and love as before, better than

Looking Beyond.

ever. You say sometimes—I am very lonely here ; you will not be lonely there ; think what a crowd of happy ones is waiting to welcome you, and with them we shall be partakers of God's everlasting Kingdom. Mothers, when your babe was taken away so soon, did you wonder at the reason ? Why, it has all eternity to develop in, to love you in. We do not know now what we shall be like, but I am sure that Jesus, Who loved the little children on earth, has plenty of room for them in Paradise.

“ A land of little faces, very little, very fair,
And everyone shall know her own, and cleave unto it there.”

Our friends are taken from earth to draw us nearer to God and Heaven. When a ship is wrecked on the rocks near land, the only way to save the crew is to send a rocket with a thin cord, to the cord they fasten a strong cable, and make a way between the perishing people and the shore. So each loved one taken from us is a cord, a link, binding us to Heaven, drawing us poor travellers over life's sea nearer the shore, making a way between earth and Paradise. I think all our sorrows are sent for the same purpose, to lead us to look up to God and eternity. When we are prosperous, and all things smile upon us, we look only on this world, we say to our soul—Eat, drink, and be merry, there

Looking Beyond. so

is no thought beyond this life. Then the sorrow comes, misfortune falls on us, and God washes our eyes with tears to make us see more clearly. We learn then that there is something more than this little life, something more than this little world, something more important than our little schemes, and works, and pleasures. We learn to think of our soul as immortal, we learn to take a wider view, to lift our eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh our help, a land where "Beyond these voices there is peace."

Sermon V.

WHAT GOD IS.

(Christmas.)

PSALM CXLVII. 1, 2.

"The Lord doth build up Jerusalem; He gathereth together the outcasts of Israel; He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds."

WHAT is God? Who can answer that question? We are told that God is Almighty, able to do all things, and we, who can do so little, cannot understand. We are told that God is All Wise, and we, who are so ignorant, cannot understand. We are told that He is All Pure, and we, who are so sin-stained, cannot understand. But Christmas comes and helps us. Jesus came into the world, and took our nature upon Him, and was made Man, and went about doing good, and taught us that God is love. Then we began to understand. We know what love is, the

What God Is. so

love of a mother for her child, of one friend for another, and we begin to understand what God feels for us, yet we are so selfish in our love that we cannot understand fully. The text tells what Jesus Christ came into the world to do for us. We understand what a man is by seeing what he does, by their fruits we know them. There was a clergyman in a certain parish, a very good, earnest, and faithful man, and the people respected him, but they were rather afraid of him, because they did not understand him. Then the cholera broke out, and the houses were full of dead and dying people. This Parish Priest went where all others were afraid to go, he nursed the sick, carried out the dead to burial, facing death day and night. Then the people said—See how he loves us, *now* we understand.

So before the first Christmas morning, people would not understand that God is love, they thought of Him as a Judge, a Ruler, an Avenger. Jesus Christ came and healed the sick, and comforted the sad, and embraced the children, and faced sorrow and pain, and suffering and death. Then men said—He loved me, and gave Himself for me, *now* we understand.

Well, the text tells us what Christ does for us: "The Lord doth build up Jerusalem." Not merely

What God Is.

the city of the Jews, but the spiritual Jerusalem, the Holy Catholic Church, whose stones are living people. "We have a strong city, salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks." God is always building, creating.

There was a time when there was no earth or sky, no seas or rivers, and God created, built them up, bit by bit. It took ages to do it ; no one knows how old the world is, or the sun and moon, or how old the oldest star is, or how young the youngest. No one knows when man was first created. Some say man began with a little speck or germ of life, and it grew and grew till it became man. It does not really matter, man began with God, the man came from God, for there can be no life without God.

The Bible tells us that God created man out of the dust of the earth. He began very low down, from the lowly foundation of dust, God built up the splendid creature—man. He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, God's breath, and the dust became the temple of the living God. So now God is always building up our character, our soul, raising us up higher. Men pull down and destroy, they pull down our character, destroy our good name. They laugh at our weakness ; God builds up, He strengthens us, helps us. The world lets

What God Is.

the wanderer go on wandering; God seeks and saves that which is lost. The world despises the weak, and says the weakest must go to the wall. God strengthens the weak, and lifts up the feeble out of the mire. The world triumphs over the fallen, God lifts them up.

"The Lord doth build up Jerusalem," that is His Universal Church, the Holy Catholic Church throughout all the world. How was it begun? How is a house begun? With a few bricks and stones. How is a city begun? With a few houses here and there. How was the Church begun? With eight persons in the Ark, with one family in a tent, with a little band of men and women in the upper room at Jerusalem. From these small beginnings God built up His great Universal Church, and it is growing greater every day.

"He gathereth together the outcasts of Israel." God is still building, raising up, saving. He desireth not the death of a sinner, He seeks and saves. The world shuts the door on the outcast, Jesus opens the door and gathers in the outcasts. Jesus did not come into the world to frighten people into Heaven with fire and sword, He did not come to crush the sinner and bless the saint, He came to help all, to lift up those who were down, wounded by the malice of the devil, to exalt the humble and

What God Is.

meek, the despised and rejected. His door of mercy stood open for all who would enter, and it stands open now. Does the Gospel tell us only about strictly religious people, like the Pharisee and the Prodigal's elder brother? No, or we should despair. It tells us of the Prodigal Son coming home penitent, of the lost sheep carried back to the fold, of the leper being cleansed, and the blind receiving his sight, of the fallen woman being forgiven.

"He gathereth together the outcasts." Ah, that touches some of us. We say—I am an outcast from my Father's House, I have broken His Commandments, I have wandered afar off, I am a leper of sin, unclean, I am too blind to see the right road, I have fallen, like the woman in the Gospel, I am a dead man, dead in trespasses and sin. Then comes the message, "He gathereth together the outcasts." He says—Come unto Me. He never shuts the door upon the penitent, or leaves the outcast outside, there is always room for another, always a welcome ready. He gathereth together the outcasts.

Again, He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds. He is always building, raising up, strengthening. The wounds which Jesus binds up are not bodily wounds, there are worse things than they. A broken heart is worse than a

What God Is. So

broken limb, a sore spirit is worse than a sore body. There is no medical hospital where they treat these cases. Doctors can do very wonderful things in these days, but they cannot cure a broken heart, or put a healing plaster on a wounded conscience, they have no medicine to heal that sickness. This world is full of wounded folks who are quite sound in body, no one knows their secret sorrows, and sins, and pains; the streets of the world are full of tragedies. There are lives all grey with disappointment and sorrow, where all wishes are disappointed, all hopes shattered. There are sensitive, sad folk who shrink from the rough world as from a blow; there are the broken in heart, the wounded, and no one on earth can enter into their griefs or heal their wounds. The world does not understand them, nor care for them.

How few of our sorrows we can tell even to our friends. They are too deep down for words, perhaps for tears. Jesus Christ alone can help us, He is the only doctor for a broken heart and a wounded spirit, the Church is the only hospital for sick souls. The sad heart that turns to Jesus finds healing, the soul wounded by sin, yet penitent, finds pardon, and hears the blessed words, "Go in peace, thy sins be forgiven thee." Ah, those who love God hear what the world cannot hear.

What God Is.

"It is said somewhere at twilight,
A great bell softly swings,
And a man may listen and hearken
To the wondrous sound that rings.
If he thrusts from his soul all hatred,
And thought of wicked things,
He can hear in the holy twilight
How the bell of the angels rings."

The careless world hears no heavenly music, no rustle of angels' wings, but those who love God can hear the voice of Jesus, and catch an echo of the angels' song in Heaven.

Again, "He telleth the number of the stars, and calleth them all by their names." God not only creates, but sustains all things. He keeps the universe going. The man of science makes a discovery, and writes books about it, and thinks how clever he is, and sometimes forgets God altogether. But what man of science could keep this world going for five seconds? The astronomer can foretell an eclipse, but he cannot cause one; there is someone at the back of all this, some guiding hand, some directing mind—in a word, Almighty God. He telleth, that is counts, the number of the stars. How many stars can we count? Not a tithe of them. We have given names to some of them, but God names them all, and knows them all.

~~"God's in His Heaven,~~
All's right with the world."

What God Is. So

God numbereth all the stars, and all the hairs of your head, and all the days and years of your life. No star falls, no sparrow falls, no man falls, without our Father. There are no mistakes in God's great census, He knows all His sheep, and what they require ; He knows how much daily bread the birds in your garden want, and how much you want in the house. He knows exactly what is best for us all, the best food, the best medicine, the best punishment, the best blessing, and He gives it. You think, perhaps, that you are carving out your own little path in life, driving your own little car of life, getting your own little living. Not so, it is God Who is doing all this. God is always busy, always at work, He neither slumbers nor sleeps, He never forgets His creatures. Brethren, be humble, trust to God's guidance, be not over-anxious, He will provide. All things work together for good for those who trust God. He buildeth up Jerusalem, His Church, all nations and languages, races and kindreds are built into it ; He gathereth together the outcasts daily. Have you wandered, sinned, lost yourself ? Then cry to the Lord, and He will gather you in. Are you broken-hearted, wounded ? Then cry to the Lord, and He will heal you. He knoweth all the stars by name, He knoweth all of us by name, and He loves us, God is love.

Sermon VI.

THE PLAGUE SPOT.

(Lent.)

LEVITICUS XIV. 35.

"It seemeth to me that there is, as it were, a plague in the house."

IN the middle of the seventeenth century a frightful plague of sickness visited London. All who were able fled from the city, those who did not died by thousands. All day long the Church bells tolled, the streets were deserted, and many of them were closed against traffic; at night carts went about with a clanging bell and a lantern, and one cried—Bring out your dead. Many house doors were close shut, and marked with a cross, and all this meant that the plague was there. Among the Israelites there was a plague, but of a different kind, it was the plague of leprosy in the body, and also in the house, where

The Plague Spot. &c

it was like what we call dry rot. It appeared in a house first as a little red or green spot on the wall, quite a trifling thing. But the householder was obliged to go to the Priest and say, "It seemeth to me that there is, as it were, a plague in the house." Then the Priest visited the house, and shut it up for a week. If the spot on the wall did not grow larger it was cut out, and the house was declared clean. If the spot increased, the stones of the walls were taken out, and fresh ones built in, and the old stones were carried a long way off. If the spot appeared again, it was known to be the fretting leprosy, an incurable plague, and the house was pulled down. Now, brethren, modern science has changed all this ; our houses are better built and ventilated, our towns are more clean and healthy, and yet there is often a plague in the house. I see one house, there is no red spot growing on the walls, no cross marking the door, yet I say—It seemeth to me that there is, as it were, a plague in the house.

A house has a plague in it if God is not there. There are some houses where God is shut out, they will not have Him there, there is no room for Him, no welcome, no place ; there is a plague in that house, death is there. Two cannot walk together unless they be agreed ; if people do not love God, nor speak to Him, nor sing His praises, they do

☛ The Plague Spot.

not want Him in the house. If you talk to a blind man about the beauty of nature, he does not understand you ; if you talk to a deaf man about music, he does not understand you ; if you talk to a dirty man about the pleasure of a bath, he does not understand ; and so with some people if you speak to them about God, they do not know God, they do not wish to know Him.

We have had Christianity for twenty centuries, there is a Church in every parish, yet there are thousands of houses with a plague there, because God is not in them. There is no God in the work room, His Name is never spoken except in an oath ; there is no God in the children's room, the little ones never hear of God except when the parents curse them or each other. There is no God in the bedroom, no prayer for a blessing. There is no God present at meals, no grace, no thanksgiving. There are thousands of such places in Christian England, where there is no God in the house, only a plague. These plague-stricken houses are not only bad in themselves, but bad for others, for the neighbours, for the parish. The houses during the plague in London were marked with a cross, as a warning for the people to keep away from them, but the plague of sin and unrighteousness is more dangerous still. People are afraid to go to a house

The Plague Spot. 50

where there is infectious disease, yet they go to the house of the godless and the unbeliever, and there is a worse plague there. Every bad house makes others bad. Example is everything, we catch the manners, the words, the habits of the people with whom we live, good or bad. The house with the dirty windows will make other windows dirty, the man with dirty clothes will leave some dirt behind him. The neglected garden, full of weeds, sends some bad seed into a neighbour's garden, and spoils it.

So the man who never goes to Church, keeps others away, his wife and family, or his next-door neighbour. No one of us lives to himself, what we do or say, good or bad, affects someone else. If you stand at a certain spot, and shout, you will hear a thousand echoes. All we do and say has an echo; if a man swears he makes a thousand echoes of oaths in other houses; if he sings a hymn to God, he wakes an echo in another heart, and makes him sing. A child swears to-day, it is the echo of what he heard yesterday at home. As says the proverb, if you live with the lame, you will learn to limp; he who works with the chimney smells of its smoke. If a house is surrounded by flowers it smells sweet, if it is encircled by foul ditches it smells evilly. So is it with the company we keep.

The Plague Spot.

There is a story told of the great preacher, Frederick William Robertson, of Brighton. A Brighton tradesman was asked if he remembered anything very striking about him. The man led the way into a room, and, pointing to a portrait of Robertson, said, "Whenever I am tempted to do a mean thing, I look at that picture, and the pure face recalls me to my better self." What an echo such a man's life has left! We cannot be near a good man without getting some good, nor near a bad man without getting some evil. A certain French nobleman, who was an unbeliever, lodged for a time with the saintly Fenelon, and at last he said, "If I stay here any longer I shall be a Christian in spite of myself."

Then the house without prayer has a plague in it. If I see a house where the children never say "Our Father," night and morning, where the parents lie down and rise up without a word to God, where the young men and maidens sit down to eat and rise up to play without a word to God, I say of that place, "It seemeth to me that there is, as it were, a plague in this house."

Have you entered a house which has long been empty and shut up? All is dark, dismal, and dirty, there is no sunshine or fresh air, everything smells of decay, disease, and death. So is it with the house

The Plague Spot. 96

where there is no prayer. There is no sunshine there, no happiness, no fresh, healthy life, no hope, no trust, because there is no prayer, no God. Yet some of these people who never pray, think when they come to die, they are going to Heaven. But why should they? They lived without God here, why should they expect to live with God for ever? Nothing unclean shall enter Heaven, and yet some of these lives were always unclean. What could they do in Heaven, how could they be at home there? Do you think that death will make us different people from what we are now? We shall be the same people, if we are godless here we shall be godless hereafter. Heaven would be penal servitude to a good many people; we must begin the heavenly life here, if we are to continue it there. We must begin to know Jesus here, or we shall never know Him in the world to come; we must learn what pure love means now, or we shall never go where all is pure, all is love. It has been truly said—We must have a little Heaven to get to Heaven in.

Then a house without a Bible has a plague in it. The first things I look for in a house are the books, they tell me what the household is like. In these days everyone reads something. The poorest working man reads his weekly newspaper, and his

❧ The Plague Spot.

daughter her penny novel. But these are not sufficient. If the Bible is not read, there is a plague in the house. It is like a house without a clock, the inmates do not know the times and seasons, or how to pass the day. The captain of a ship carries a chart, whereon his course is marked ; all the rocks and shoals are set down, and therefore he knows how to steer. How can we cross the waves of this troublesome world, how can we know what course to steer, without our chart, that is the Bible? If we are not shaping our course of life by God's Book, we are adrift on the wide sea, with nothing to guide us to the harbour.

Some days after a certain battle in the American war the dead body of an officer was found with his hand on an open Bible. The flesh of the hand had been eaten away, and the bony skeleton only remained, but it rested on the words, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me." We must all pass through that valley one day, and we shall want something more than the novel or the newspaper, they will not comfort us. If there is no Bible in the house there is a plague in it.

Again, where selfishness and ill-temper are, there is a plague in the house. One drop of poison will

The Plague Spot. 50

turn the purest water, or the most wholesome food, into a deadly thing. So ill-temper spoils a whole household, it poisons the food and the atmosphere, it darkens the rooms, it drives out all happiness, it turns all things sour, and puts all music out of tune. Show me a house full of quarrels, angry words, fiery tempers, sulky tempers, and I say, "There is, as it were, a plague in the house."

Do you remember the parable of the devils seeking a house, and finding it swept and garnished, and ready for them? Many homes are like that, all ready for devils to occupy. There is the dumb devil of a sulky temper, sitting in gloomy silence; there is the talking devil of a passionate temper, pouring out fiery words; and the prickly, selfish temper, making everyone uncomfortable. When I hear angry words coming out from the door and windows, I say—It seemeth to me that there is a plague in the house.

Notice, brethren, that the plague may commence with very small beginnings. The plague in the house began with a little greenish patch on the wall; the plague in the body began with a little spot, but it meant ruin to the house, death to the patient. A little spark of fire in a baker's shop caused the fire which burned down nearly all London. The dry rot in our ships in the Crimea destroyed more

— The Plague Spot.

than the Russian guns. So the plague in the house begins with little acts of neglect, little prayers left unsaid, little duties left undone, little faults left unchecked, little tempers uncontrolled, little selfish acts encouraged, till the door is open for the devils to enter, the plague has begun.

But what of the remedy? What does a housewife do with a dirty, neglected house? She opens the windows, and lets in God's blessed sunshine, and pure air; then she commences to sweep and cleanse. Some of our lives want cleansing badly. We cannot do it ourselves, but we can ask God to help us. We can open the windows of the soul, and let in the sweet breath of the Holy Spirit, we can say:—

“Come, Thou Holy Spirit, come,
And from Thy celestial home
Shed a ray of light divine;
Heal our wounds, our strength renew;
On our dryness pour Thy dew,
Wash the stains of filth away.”

Let us disinfect and purify our house with prayer. Let God's praises rise up like the incense, a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour, then God will dwell in the house, the angels will ascend and descend upon our daily life, the devils will be cast out, and the plague stayed.


Sermon VII.

THE DAY'S JOURNEY.

(Lent.)

I KINGS XIX. 4.

"He went a day's journey into the wilderness."

LIJAH, the prophet, was in danger, fear, weakness, and he went a day's journey into the wilderness. He left his work and duty behind; he asked that he might die. Many good men have been like that good man Elijah. Disappointment and depression have come upon them; they want to flee away from their post; they say—Let me die, I am not better than my fathers. Elijah found God's angel in the wilderness, to strengthen and guide him, and he heard God's voice.

Surely this is a parable of life. Each day of our life is a day's journey in the wilderness. We live by the day, not by the week or month. Like Israel of old, we take a day's journey into the wilderness, and we are a day's journey nearer the

§ The Day's Journey.

Promised Land, nearer home. We know nothing about to-morrow, our journey may end to-night, we live by the day. Like Elijah, we are often cast down, disappointed, depressed, we seem to be failures; we say—Why was I ever born, take away my life, for I am not better than my fathers. Then God's angel comes to us, if we are praying people. We do not know how close the angels are to us; life is a wilderness, but there are plenty of angels in it, the ladder is still set up from earth to Heaven, and angels of comfort, of strength, of mercy, are ascending and descending upon it. Every praying man has an angel close to him. If our ears and eyes were not so holden by earthly things we should oftener see the angel faces, oftener hear the rustle of angels' wings.

The angel commanded Elijah to arise and eat, because the journey was too great for him. Surely this is true of us, our journey through the wilderness is too great for us. How weary and heavy laden most of us are, how we fall and stumble and faint by the way, how weak the strongest of us is. No one ever journeyed through the wilderness of life to the Promised Land of Paradise by his own strength, the journey is too great for us. Then comes to us the message—Arise, eat. Arise, take higher ground, draw near to the altar, arise to the

The Day's Journey. so

highest service ; because Jesus says—My flesh is meat indeed. So shall we go on in the strength of that food many days, till we hear God speaking to us in the holy mount.

He went a day's journey into the wilderness ; life is a wilderness, because we cannot see our way. There was no high road in the wilderness for Israel, there is none through life for us. We cannot see ahead, we know not what a day nor an hour may bring forth. When we start on our day's journey in the morning we cannot tell where we shall be in the evening. Some people love to choose their path in life ; they fancy they can see it stretching for miles in front of them ; they plan for years to come, but they soon find that they have wandered out of the way in the wilderness. Brethren, live for to-day, take a day's journey into the wilderness, for you know not what shall be on the morrow.

How did Israel find their way through the wilderness ? They did not find it, God led them in the wilderness like a flock. So with us, the flock of His Church, the sheep of His pasture ; we should feel every morning—I am going a day's journey into the wilderness ; O Lord, be Thou my guardian and my guide, go before me in the way, prevent me, O Lord, in all my doings with Thy most gracious favour. If you are going on a journey

✥ The Day's Journey.

here, you are careful to have everything you need with you, clothing, money, food. But on the journey of life have you got God with you, have you asked God to go before you, and show you the way? In a word, do you pray about your life, your work, your difficulties, as you take your journey through the wilderness? In their journeyings, Israel never lost sight of the pillar of fire and cloud; let us never lose sight of Jesus, never go out of hearing of the Church's voice, or we shall wander in the wilderness out of the way.

Remember, the way through the wilderness is God's way, not ours; when we try to choose our own way we lose ourselves. I was walking lately in a town which I thought I knew perfectly; presently I asked my way, and found that I was going exactly in the opposite direction to the right one. God maps out our lives, and marks out our road through life; we try to plan, and contrive, and arrange our journey, and all our plans are upset, and we wander out of the way. Brethren, follow the guiding light, let God lead you on your day's journey through the wilderness, He knows the best way to our Promised Land. Israel might have gone to Canaan by a shorter and easier way, and we sometimes think that our path in life might be easier, less full of sorrows and trials, but God

The Day's Journey. So

knows best. The wilderness way is good for us. In a fog in London people can only wander slowly from one lamp to another, they often take a wrong turn, and have to start over again, but they get home at last.

Again, this life is a wilderness because it is full of difficulties. The wilderness way is rough, and stony, and hard, and difficult, so in life. The way to Paradise is no primrose path, no green, soft pasture. Life is full of stony, hard, rough roads, and steep, weary hills, but, remember, people who travel on hard roads get hard feet. God hardens our feet to tread the day's journey. If He sends us a rough road, He sends us extra strength to travel on it; if the hill difficulty is very steep, His staff is always at our service, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." I know that life is often hard, especially to God's faithful servants; I know that we are often weary and discouraged because of the way, but there is this comfort. When we climb a steep hill, we think of the glorious view we shall see from the top. When we travel on a hard road, we think of the delightful rest when the journey is over. So with life, if we climb the hill of duty here, what a glorious vision we shall get one day there, if we tread the hard path patiently, what a rest remaineth for the people of God.

of The Day's Journey.

Then life is a wilderness because of the enemies which surround us. For Israel there were Philistines, Moabites, Amalekites, their sword was seldom in the sheath. Here, again, is a parable of life in the wilderness, it is a day's journey, a day's battle. It was good for Israel, it is good for us. Plenty of fighting makes good soldiers, the sword which hangs long idle on the wall grows rusty, the soldier in time of peace becomes soft and idle. The Christian who never watches, never prays, is lost. Israel would never have produced a Joshua or a Gideon, would never have taken Jericho, but for the constant fighting. Rome, when she was always at war, was mistress of the world, Rome given up to ease and luxury became the slave of barbarians. Where would England be to-day if she were not among the fighting nations? So is it with God's people. We soon find that we cannot have our own way in life, there are giants to fight. Every struggle, every battle, every fall, every mistake, makes us stronger and better. Life is like a great public school, where we have to fight our way up. Who are the greatest men? The men who had everything done for them, who were born to ease and luxury? No, those who fought with adversity, and conquered, those who encountered obstacles, and climbed over them, those who failed and fell, but who rose up

The Day's Journey. 50

again. Parliament at first refused to hear Disraeli, but he told them that they should hear him one day, and they did. Men laughed at Stephenson and his steam engine. Men said that Jesus was mad, and now the world is at His feet. So the best Christians are not those sheltered from temptation, who sit sunning themselves by the Church wall, but the fighters out in the battle of life, the pilgrims on the rough wilderness way, who have to cross swords with the devil daily, to fight with angry tempers and cruel words. The highest blessing comes only to the fighter, to those who wrestle, like Jacob, with God's angel.

Once more, Israel in the wilderness left foot-marks, and cast shadows. There were shadows both good and evil, foot-marks pointing the right way and the wrong. There was the shadow of the pillar, telling of God's presence, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. There was the shadow of Moses, the wise and patient leader, and of Joshua, the soldier of the Lord. There, too, were foot-marks, some pointing in the right way, some the signs of those who wandered from the right way and perished, or who rebelled against God, like Korah and his company, and found their place among the graves of lust.

Brethren, in the wilderness of this world we

☞ The Day's Journey.

all cast shadows and leave foot-prints. Each day's journey in the wilderness, each day of life, leaves a foot-mark, pointing in the right way or the wrong. Each one of us casts a shadow, good or bad. They brought the sick people from their beds, that the shadow of S. Peter might fall upon them, and heal them. The shadow of a good man, his influence, his example, does good, it makes other people better. The shadow of a bad man darkens a parish, or home, and makes others bad.

Think, every morning when you wake—I am going a day's journey into the wilderness, I shall cast a shadow, I shall leave a foot-print, my brethren will see and hear what I do and say. They will follow my lead. God's great Church, like Israel of old, is travelling through the wilderness, and men look at each other, and follow in their foot-steps, and imitate their example. People do what they see others do. Brethren, which way do our foot-prints point, to the Promised Land, or the prison house of Egypt? Remember, there are others coming after you, who will tread in your tracks. Parents, the children are coming after you; you will go, but your influence will remain, they cannot bury that in your grave. Which way do your foot-prints point, towards Jesus, towards the Church and the Altar? Remember, the children are following after you.

The Day's Journey. 50

"We are travelling home to God
In the way our fathers trod."

Can we say that truly, are our faces steadfastly set to go up to the Heavenly Jerusalem, are we travelling on the way which leads to everlasting life, are we following Jesus as our Guide through the wilderness, fighting the good fight, strengthened with the Bread of Life? If so, we are a happy people, and for us there will be only a few more days' journey in the wilderness, and the voice of Jesus will say to us—Thou art to cross over Jordan this day, but fear not, for I am with thee, My rod and My staff shall comfort thee.

Sermon VIII.

DENYING CHRIST.

(Lent.)

S. JOHN XVIII. 17.

“Then saith the damsel that kept the door unto Peter, Art not thou also one of this Man’s disciples? He saith, I am not.”



DO not think that S. Peter ever forgot that night. All through his after life and ministry in the forefront of the Apostles, when he preached those burning words at Pentecost, when they brought the sick people to lie in his shadow, when all men hung upon his words, when the angel touched him and set him free from the prison, there came the memory of that shameful night, when he stood in the glare of the camp fire and denied his Master thrice. The old legends say that afterwards, whenever he heard the cock crow, S. Peter wept. Remember, brethren, that the fall of S. Peter is not merely ancient history, it occurs

Denying Christ. 50

every day in one sense, it is a lesson and a warning for us all. Every day men deny Christ, every day men crucify Christ. Look at the picture, S. Peter stands by the fire, stretching his hands over the blaze, the red light shining on his pale face. Jesus is close at hand, a prisoner before the High Priest, but S. Peter is not at His side. The damsel who keeps the door looks enquiringly at S. Peter, and says—Art thou also one of this Man's disciples? Now is the time for S. Peter to play the man, to acknowledge Christ, to show his colours. What is the answer? I am not.

Here, then, is our first lesson, to learn what poor creatures even the best of us are, if we trust to ourselves. S. Peter had been the bravest of the disciples, his faith had been the strongest, and he had received the name of the stone in consequence. In Gethsemane, when the rest hung back, his sword flashed out; he had been strong in his promises, "Though I should die with Thee, yet will I never deny Thee." And he meant it, he was ready to follow Jesus to death; yet, when the trial came, when the temptation met him, he was a coward. He saw the scowling faces of his brother Jews, he heard the ominous murmur—Crucify Him, crucify Him, and he knew too well what that meant. S. Peter was afraid of his fellow-men. Nicodemus

✠ Denying Christ.

was afraid of his brethren in the Jewish Council, and so he came to Jesus by night. Pilate was afraid of public opinion, and so he condemned the innocent blood. The worst of all cowards is he who is afraid to do what he knows to be right, and to confess Christ openly; who says—Yes, I am a follower of Christ; I believe in Him, but I do not care to say so openly. These are the people who put out the candle before saying their prayers, lest someone should see them on their knees.

I was travelling once in a railway carriage with a number of rough merchant sailors who had just come ashore. Presently we entered a large tunnel, and a grizzled old sailor whispered in my ear—I always say my prayers night and morning. He was afraid to confess Christ except in the dark. I have known people go to Church and sit in the darkest corner, lest their friends should recognize them. Brethren, do not fear what men may do to you, or say about you, never mind the praise of men, seek the praise of God; it is better to be unpopular, to be laughed at, to be persecuted for being Christ's followers, than to be popular at the price of your soul.

Years ago, at a London dinner party, the conversation turned upon religion, and it was ridiculed and spoken against; a guest of high position, one

Denying Christ. 50

of the leaders in Parliament, asked to have his carriage ordered. He apologized to the host for having to leave, but added—I cannot stay here longer, for I am still a Christian. Brethren, have the courage of your opinions; if the world says—Art not thou also one of Christ's disciples, be brave enough to say—I am. Do not trust to your own strength. The last thing which S. Peter desired was to deny his Lord, He thought he was quite safe, he was always close to the Master, ready to follow Him and to fight for Him, yet he fell. No one knows how weak he is. You may say—I was always brought up as a Churchman, I read the Bible, I pray, I am baptized, confirmed, I shall never deny my Lord. Ah, my brethren, you do not know your weak place. Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. You do not know what sword the devil has got waiting for you, and what a terrible temptation is in your path.

A man was walking to his work lately in a Staffordshire town, when the earth opened at his feet and swallowed him up. He was walking over an old coal-mine, and knew it not. We are always walking over a mine of hidden temptation, the fires are ever burning close to our feet. Do not trust to yourselves, watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. Do not say—I am a Church-goer, and

Denying Christ.

a Communicant, I am quite safe ; S. Peter had just come from that solemn scene when Jesus took bread and brake it, the sacramental wine was fresh upon his lips, yet he denied his Master thrice. Judas went out from that scene in the upper room and betrayed Jesus. The young ruler went straight from the presence of the Lord and made the great refusal. There have been men who spoke for Christ on platform, and preached Christ in pulpit, and went home and fell before some gross temptation. Remember, the devil always strikes with the keenest sword when we are coming from the House of God.

Learn, as a second lesson, that there are thousands who deny Christ to-day from various causes. They live in a Christian country, they are called Christians, but they are not true followers of Christ. One reason is *love of their sin*. They have no objection to Christ, but they want to keep their sin as well. They are not honest enough to say so, and they make many excuses, but the truth is, they like their sin, and do not wish to leave it. The drunkard says—If I must give up Christ, or my strong drink, I will give up Christ. The unclean man says—If I must give up my bad company, and my evil lust, or give up Christ, then I will keep my sin. One says—If it is a question between Christ and my own way, I will choose my own way. I know

Denying Christ. 56

that I am a prodigal son, but I love the swine trough and the swine too well to arise and go to my Father. To all such people conscience whispers—Art not thou also one of Christ's disciples? And the answer of the heart is—I am not. Of course, these people do not talk in this way, they are not honest enough to say—I prefer my sin to Christ. So they talk of their doubts, they call themselves Agnostics, they do not believe this or that, they doubt the truth of the Bible. But it all means one thing, they love their sin. As someone truly says, "If you pull up their infidelity, you will always find sin at the root."

Another reason why men deny Christ is *greed of gain, love of money*. When one man betrays another to his enemies for gold it is called blood-money. All money got dishonestly is blood-money, stained with the blood of Jesus, and there is much of it in circulation to-day. Thousands of men deny Christ over their desk or counter in their daily business. A trader knows that he is not honest in his dealings, that he calls things by their wrong names, and charges unjust prices for worthless goods; he knows it perfectly well, yet, if he were asked if he is a Christian, he would answer—Of course I am. He has plenty of excuses, he does what others do, it is the way of the trade, he is no worse than his

Denying Christ.

neighbours; if he acted otherwise he would lose money, he cannot afford to be strictly honest. The man knows in his heart that he is denying Christ. Conscience whispers—Art not thou also one of Christ's disciples? And his heart answers—I am not.

It is not the heathen abroad for whom I fear, but the Christian at home, who denies his Master thrice, aye, six times, daily. I have heard of a man who had a wicked book bound up in the cover of a Prayer Book, and whilst he read the vile book in public, people looked at the cover and thought what a good man he was. How many people are like that, Christians outside on the cover, inside deniers of Christ.

Then the *proud, self-righteous people* deny Christ. Like the Pharisee, they thank God that they are not as other men, they do not know that they are miserable sinners, and so they do not care about the Saviour. No one ever came to Jesus, or ever will, except as a sinner, acknowledging his wretchedness. The self-righteous Pharisee goes away unjustified, the penitent Publican finds pardon. There are crowds of these Pharisees in Christian England to-day. Look into some Churches, crowded with wealth and fashion, and tell the people they are miserable sinners. How

Denying Christ. 80

angry they would be ; they would think you were taking a liberty with them, they would point to the free seats, or outside to the lanes and alleys, and tell you that there is the place for miserable sinners. They would say—We fast twice in the week, we give tithes of all we possess. These are the people who deny Christ.

Again, people deny Christ *because of their friends*. A godly man marries a godless, frivolous woman, or a devout woman marries a man without religion, what follows? One does not dare to confess Christ before the other, religion is kept out of sight, for fear of ridicule, till at last none remains. People make friends of the godless, they do not dare to show their colours in their presence, they try to appear as careless and indifferent as their friends, till at last they become so.

But people not only deny Christ now, but they crucify Him over and over again. Do you think S. Peter's denial did not pierce Jesus more deeply than the nails? I say that men drag Jesus to Calvary every day, in one sense. A great preacher once told this parable. A man accused of a crime, of which he was innocent, was condemned to death by wicked judges, and led forth to die. But no gibbet was provided, and no executioner was ready, and the people hoped that he would escape. Then

❖ Denying Christ.

a man arose and said—I am going to prepare a gibbet, and I will be the executioner. You wonder at such cruelty, but I tell you that every wilful sinner is that man. There are no Jews to crucify Christ to-day, yet many a man, by his acts, says—I will crucify Him. Brethren, conscience speaks to you now, and says—Art not thou also one of Christ's disciples? What is your answer, dare you say—I am not?


Sermon IX.

PARADISE LOST.

(Lent.)

GENESIS III. 1.

“Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made.”

N the very first pages of the Bible God strikes the keynote of the whole Book, the blessedness of innocence, the misery of sin; He sets before us a choice, life or death, happiness or wretchedness. The picture in Genesis is a great object lesson of innocence yielding to temptation, of the way in which sin comes, what it does, what fruit it produces. Some people find great difficulties in the Book of Genesis; they want to know how the serpent could speak, why the mere eating a fruit should cause such sorrow and bring such punishment. To me it is simple enough, it is an allegory, a parable, a picture. The serpent

represents temptation whispering to a soul, putting bad desires into the heart, evil thoughts into the mind. Then comes lust, the desire to know things which are better not known, the wish to pry into secrets which are not good for us. Mankind had all the fruits of Eden except that of one tree, the knowledge of good and evil. Mankind tasted that fruit, and lost its innocency. It matters not what the fruit was, it means the knowledge of evil.

We look at the story of the temptation in Eden as being very old, but it is repeated afresh every day of our lives. As long as we obey God and keep innocency we are in Eden, in Paradise. Paradise means being close to God, free from sin, and so free from fear. There is a serpent in every Paradise, the devil has the pass-key into every life garden, none escape temptation. In tropic lands there are lovely gardens of flowers, fair as Eden, everything is pleasant to the sight and taste; suddenly a deadly serpent glides out of the flower beds, there is danger, poison, death in that beautiful Eden. So we may live in the Paradise of a happy home, innocent children, with no knowledge of evil, no fear, no shame. God is very near to us, and we talk to Him in the prattling prayers of infancy. But the serpent is there, temptation comes into the Eden of home, it whispers in our ear, it puts the

Paradise Lost. 20

bad thought into our mind, it points to the unclean book, or the impure sight, and we taste the forbidden fruit, and our innocence is lost, Paradise is no longer ours.

How did the devil tempt mankind? Through his weakest place, which is, in most cases, a woman. The story of Adam and Eve goes through the history of mankind. Samson was a strong man, but his weak place was Delilah. David's weak place was Bathsheba, Solomon's weak place was his love of strange women. For Ahab there was Jezebel, Herodias for Herod, Cleopatra for Antony. The strongest men become weak before women. Satan knows that if he can tempt the woman, he holds the key of the man's heart. The greatest tragedies in the history of the world have come through the influence of women who listened to the tempter, as the greatest blessings have come from good women, good mothers.

Notice how the tempter spoke—Yea, hath God said ye shall not eat of every tree? He tries to throw doubt on God's Word, he leads them to think that it cannot be really true, that they are surely mistaken about it. It is just the same now. Satan puts doubts into our hearts; he says—Do you really believe that God means what He says, do you not misunderstand the Bible? God is love, you say, so

He cannot be so severe and harsh; what He says about sin and punishment is only meant to frighten you, He does not mean it; besides, God is not so strict now. Besides, how do you know that the Bible is true, some very clever people do not believe it; it is only a poem, they tell us, a fable, a story book, it is not actually true, so we need not be frightened. That is what the same devil, with the same temptation, says to us to-day. Eve knew what was right, and yet did what was wrong, and hence came sin. God tells us all what we may and what we may not do. We cannot say that we did not know it was wrong, we do know, the conscience cannot lie. No one commits deliberate sin without knowing that he does wrong. You have seen an alarm clock; when the hour arrives the alarm sounds. Well, God gives us all such a warning, when we are tempted to sin the alarm sounds, conscience speaks. Instead of listening to conscience, Eve listened to the tempter, she began to talk with him.

Brethren, never talk with the enemy, it is like playing with fire, you are sure to burn yourself. We cannot help meeting bad companions, but we need not talk with them; we cannot help temptation coming to the door, but we need not open it, or converse with it. What ruined Eve, ruins all mankind, listening to, talking with, the tempter,

Paradise Lost. 50

instead of turning our back upon him. Never listen to, or argue with, an unbeliever, it is like living with a small-pox patient, you are very likely to catch his complaint; get out of the way. The woman listened to the tempter, and he told her that she should not die, that God does not mean what He says. That is precisely what the unbeliever tells us to-day. The woman saw that the tree was pleasant to the eyes, and she desired to taste its fruit. When we look at a wrong thing through the devil's spectacles it seems very innocent and desirable. Satan always wraps up his poison in a coating of sugar, he sweetens the deadly cup, he makes the forbidden fruit seem very beautiful, he never fishes with a bare hook, but hides it with a pretty bait. The longer we look at a temptation the more pleasant it appears, the more we taste the devil's sweetmeats the more we desire them. No one thinks of sin till he has tasted it, nor desires to do wrong till he has done it.

Now look at the results of yielding to temptation. The eyes of them both were opened. They got what they wanted, they knew what they did not know before, but it did not bring happiness. They knew that they were naked, that the world was different from what it had been, it had grown cold and sad. They had lost all that made life

❧ Paradise Lost.

worth living, their innocence, and they knew what they had never known before—shame. So it is always after we have sinned, the world does not look the same, life is different. Yesterday we could look on our parents' faces with innocent love, to-day we are ashamed to look. Yesterday we talked to God as our Father, to-day we are afraid to speak to Him. Yesterday we knew what happiness meant, because we were innocent, to-day we can only know remorse, because we have sinned. All life has become bitter and sad, because sin has poisoned it.

Mankind tried to hide its nakedness with clothing. So now, many people are more particular about their clothes than the body they cover, often there are clean garments on a dirty body. There is the respectable coat hiding the wicked heart, a good suit outside, and a bad character within. Then, we read, the man and the woman heard the voice of God in the garden. We always hear it. God's voice goes through all nature; it speaks in the roar of the ocean, in the sigh of the wind, in the rustle of the cornfield, in the crash of the thunder. Be sure your sin will find you out. In the garden, in the field, in the farm, in the workshop, you will hear God's voice saying, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." There is an old story which tells how a certain man killed all the swallows round his house,

Paradise Lost. 90

because he thought they said in their twittering song that he had murdered his friend. The guilty hear God's accusing voice, and see the shadow of the avenging sword, everywhere.

Adam and Eve hid themselves, hid themselves from God. They ran away from God's voice and God's presence. That is just what sinners do now, they commit some wrong act, and their first thought is to hide away from God. They turn their back on the Church and the Altar, they creep out of sight into the dark, loving darkness better than light, because their deeds are evil. They are not happy in God's presence, so the Church and the Sacraments know them no more; they hate God's Priest because he speaks God's Word; they say to the Church and the Bible—Hast thou found me, O mine enemy? God said to Adam—Where art thou? Hitherto they had walked together as friends, now they were estranged, there was between them a great gulf fixed. God says to us who have sinned—Where art thou? Child of My love, whom I redeemed, whom I held in Mine Arms, whom I love, where art thou? Prodigal, thou hast left thy Father's House, and thy Father's Table, and the Bread of Life, and has gone into the far country of sin and sorrow, the devil's country, where art thou? Brethren, ask yourselves the question now—

❧ Paradise Lost.

Where am I? Have I forsaken God, have I broken His Commandments, am I starving on the world's husks, where am I in God's eyes, where am I going, if I die to-night, what then?

Adam said—I was afraid. That was the first time that word was used by man. Man innocent knew not what fear meant; man, after sinning, said—I was afraid.

“Conscience doth make cowards of us all.”

The innocent child knows nothing of fear or shame. When we have sinned we learn new words—sin, fear, sorrow, pain, remorse, grief, shame, death. We know that we are naked, guilty, wretched; we know that we must die, and that after that is the judgment.

The story of Adam's fall and our own is the same. When Adam lost innocence he lost Paradise. Some of us lived in Paradise once, we loved God, and walked in His ways; we were not afraid, we liked to be near to God in Church, in prayer, in Sacrament, we were in Paradise then. But we listened to the tempter's voice, a stain fell on our white robe, we lost our innocence, we knew the taste of sin. Then we were banished from Paradise, and we found the world cold and hard and cruel, we knew we were naked, and ashamed, and afraid.

Paradise Lost. 30

Brethren, if we are still in our sins, the angel of the fiery sword still keeps the gate of Paradise shut against us ; if we repent, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Jesus was manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil, and make us sons of God, and heirs of eternal life. Turn to Him now, brothers and sisters, a broken and a contrite heart He will not despise, He will lead you back to the Paradise of pardon here, and to the Paradise of everlasting glory hereafter.

Sermon X.

THE DAILY CROSS.

(Lent.)

S. LUKE IX. 23.

"If any man will come after Me . . . let him take up his cross daily, and follow Me."

EVERYTHING in the Christian life is a daily matter; daily work, daily prayer, daily service, daily praise, daily trial, daily bearing of the burden. Sorrow is the mark of every man, sorrow borne patiently is the mark of the Christian, the sign of the Cross. Yes, the pages of every life's story are stained with tears. There is an Eastern legend which tells of a prince, whose daughter died, and the father came to a learned sage for help. The wise man promised to restore his daughter if he would engrave on her tomb the names of three persons who had never known sorrow. The innocent child knows least of

The Daily Cross. 50

sorrow; when we are innocent we are happy. The older we grow, the more sorrow we learn. The child is in Paradise, but he tastes the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow. The more we know of the world, the more we know of trouble. "Every new lesson is a fresh grey hair." We taste the forbidden fruit, we open the forbidden book, we look into the forbidden quarter, and we learn sorrow.

The old story of Faust shows us a man who desires to know the secrets of the soul, the mysteries of life and death. He reads unholy and forbidden books, till he is able to call devils to his assistance. He receives the gift of youth when he is old, and he is allowed so many years of animal indulgence. But Faust is unhappy, he remembers his innocent past, he sees his present sin, and he looks forward to the awful future, when the penalty is the loss of his own soul. So, after thirty years of magic books, he cries, "would that I had never seen Wittenberg, and never read a book."

People have tried all sorts of devices to avoid sorrow. A great king built a grand palace, surrounded by beautiful gardens, and called it *Sans Souci*—without care. It was easy to write the name

✿ The Daily Cross.

over the gates, but all inside the palace, the king, and his servants alike, carried their load of care. We are all too fond of trying to make this world into a garden of *Sans Souci*, but in vain. A certain lady had a fine house, which she called *Satis House*, meaning that it was enough to satisfy all desires. But she was not satisfied, she grew weary and disappointed, and at last perished by her own hand within the walls of *Satis House*. We cannot build *Satis House* here. There are always some rooms hung with black, and haunted by memories of happier times.

Think what millions of voices there are sounding in the world daily ; what millions of voices there are in London alone, and they are mostly sad. Open the Bible, open the history of any nation, those being dead, yet speak, and nearly all of them speak sadly. Kings, conquerors, priests, nobles, beauties, slaves, are all there, and there is a sound of sadness in all their voices. The very first pages of the Bible are stained with tears. Adam weeps over lost Paradise, Cain over murdered Abel. Esau weeps for his forfeited blessing, Jacob for his lost darling. From Egypt's brick fields, from the way of the wilderness, Israel laments its sorrows. Job mourns his lost joys, Samson his blinded eyes ; David weeps over his dead babe and his traitorous son.

The Daily Cross. 80

What says Solomon, in all his glory? "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." What says the old man Barzillai, when the king would show him favour? "Can thy servant taste any more what I eat or what I drink? Can I hear any more the voices of singing men and singing women? Let me go to mine own city, and be buried in the city of my fathers." What says the prophet Elijah? "Take away my life, for I am not better than my fathers." Hagar beside her fainting boy, Ezekiel by the couch of his dead wife, S. Paul in the Roman prison, all have voices with tears in them. Even the Blessed Son of God is called the Man of Sorrows. Jesus wept; we know not how frequently.

Yes, the story of human life is a story written in tears. Read the history of Rome, and look on Cæsar one day ruling the world, and the next struck down by his enemies. Read the history of England, and look on Charles Stuart leaving his palace for a scaffold, and Cromwell lying sleepless for fear of an assassin. Read the history of France, and look on Napoleon with Europe at his feet, and next a ruined, banished exile, whilst the Prussian soldiers are rioting in his lovely palace of S. Cloud. Look into your own lives, unlock the drawer, take out the old letters. How many of them are edged with black. Look at the faded writing of years

The Daily Cross.

ago, where is the hand that wrote it now? Read the old diary of past days, what sad entries there are. This day my wife died—this day my child was laid in the grave. And we ask—Why is it so? Why is man born to trouble as the sparks fly upward, why are there so many tears? And the answer is—Because of sin. Man sinned, and brought sorrow into the world, put all things out of tune. There were no tears till Adam wept over a lost Paradise. Sin parted God and man, and so sorrow came. But Jesus bore our sins and troubles, He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows, and so we can make them golden steps to take us back to God. There is only one way back to Paradise, the way of the Cross, the way of sorrow borne with Jesus. “If any man will come after Me, let him take up his cross daily, and follow Me.”

Many a dark and rough road leads to a glorious prospect at last. The wilderness was hard and wild, but it was the way to the Promised Land. Our road through life may be often wet with tears, and perhaps stained with blood, but we know where it will end, where all crosses are laid aside, all tears wiped away, all sorrows turned into joy. We were not sent into the world to gather flowers along life's highway, or to sleep on beds of roses. “Life is

The Daily Cross. 50

real, life is earnest," and it means a daily journey, a daily climb, a daily labour, a daily battle, that we may get back to our lost Paradise.

Sorrow is part of our education, part of our drill. We do not blame the wise teacher because he is stern, and makes us learn our lessons, nor the surgeon because his knife is sharp and agonizing, when it saves our life. Children murmur at chastening, but it makes men of them, and so is it with the children of God. The chastened life is the best and most beautiful life. Have you ever noticed in cold weather the beautiful pictures and patterns formed upon the window panes? What made them? Not the warm sun, or the mild air, but the bitter, biting frost. So God brings out the best features of a character by the frost of sorrow.

"If any man will come after Me, let him take up his cross daily, and follow Me." Our crosses are various. One cross is the parting from one whom we love. Travellers tell of a certain pillar which marks the boundary between Russia and Siberia. Perhaps it is the saddest spot in the whole world. No other place has witnessed so much human sorrow and suffering. There hundreds of thousands of exiles have said good-bye for ever to home and country. There husbands have parted from wives, parents from children, brothers from sisters. Some

✧ The Daily Cross.

of them have been seen to carry a little Russian earth with them, to remind them of the home they will never see again. Some have pressed their faces to the loved soil for the last time, and kissed the side of the fatal pillar which looks towards home.

Well, in every man's life there is a spot like the exiles' pillar. The grave is the boundary between this world and the next, and we have all said good-bye to some dear one there. These partings are our cross, sent to lift our thoughts from things temporal to things eternal; they are a finger-post pointing out the way home, teaching us to set our affection on things above.

Or our cross may be to live in a lonely house, where the rooms no more echo with childish laughter, and the songs are silent, and the nursery bare. Where we wait in vain for "the touch of a vanished hand," and the rooms seem full of ghosts of happier times. A heavy cross, truly, and yet it is good for us. It teaches us to look beyond, to remember that this is not our rest, but only a stage on the journey. It reminds us that our earthly home is but an inn, where we stay for a little while, that here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come. Ah, those lonely rooms, that empty fireside, should be full of angels' voices, singing of Home, sweet Home.

The Daily Cross. 50

The only way to bear our cross, and endure our sorrow rightly, is to feel that we are sharing it with Jesus, that we are partakers of His sufferings. I have read of a patient in great pain in a hospital, who murmured sadly, "Never was there such affliction as mine." And another sufferer close by answered, "Once there was." Then the first said, "No one knows what I suffer." "One knows," was the gentle answer. The murmurer turned to the nurse and said, "What is the use of talking of the sufferings of Jesus, they will not mend mine." And the nurse answered, "It lightens hers." Yes, if we suffer with Him, we shall be glorified together.

"Must we go sorrowing all our day?

Yes, in suffering souls grow white.

Keep my hand through the stony way,

See where the West turns bright."

Sermon XI.

CHANGE.

(Eastertide.)

1 COR. XV. 51.

"We shall be changed."

WE shall be changed at the end of the world, for the trumpet shall sound, and this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality. But there is another change which must come first, here, and now, a change of character. It is sometimes said of someone—How he is changed. As a fact, we are always changing, we never continue in one stay. The babe changes into the youth, and the youth into the man, and manhood changes to old age and decay. No part of our body to-day is the same as when we were born, or as we were seven years ago. So our lives and characters change, either for the better or the worse.

Change. So

A famous painter desired to paint a picture of innocence, and he chose a beautiful child for his model. Years after, he determined to paint a picture of guilt, and he visited the city prison, and asked to see the worst criminal there. He was shown a man of desperate character, whose face was marked by every evil passion, and later he learnt that the man who sat to him as a model of guilt had once been the fair child whom he had drawn as innocence. So, too, we read how the little patient orphan child, whose hands the good Priest would press lovingly, grew up to be Maximilian Robespierre, one of the most bloodthirsty leaders of the French Revolution. I know to-day men who are drunkards and unclean, bad husbands and bad sons, who were once innocent boys, who sang God's praises, and prayed with pure lips, and could look the whole world in the face. These are changed for the worse. I know men who were once Church-goers, whose home is now the tavern or the prison, they are changed for the worse.

After Adam sinned, he was changed, and became afraid of God, and unfit for Paradise. After Cain sinned, he was changed, and God set a mark upon him. Everyone who sins is afraid of God, and is unfit for Paradise, and bears his mark, and is changed. On the other hand, there are those who

Change.

are changed for the better. Saul, breathing out threatenings and slaughter, is changed into S. Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ. The thief, railing at Jesus, is changed into the penitent, saying, "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy Kingdom." Augustine the profligate is changed into Augustine the saint. There are men who were once proud, who now walk humbly with their God. Prodigals who have arisen and gone home, scoffers who are earnest seekers after truth.

Whence comes the change? It is the touch of God. When we are near to God we are changed, even our features are altered. The face of Moses shone after he had been with God in the mount. Every face shines with spiritual brightness if we are near to God. They say a husband and wife who love each other, and live long together, grow very like in their features. If we love Jesus, and keep near to Him, we shall daily grow more like Him.

There is a saying that a man is known by his friends, by the company he keeps ; if we keep close to Jesus we shall show it in our lives and manners. Some painters copy the works of the great masters constantly, and study their pictures so closely, that they get to paint just like them. So those who imitate the example of Jesus, who study His Divine pattern daily, and have the picture always before

Change. 10

them, learn to be like Him. S. Francis of old lived very near to God, and loved and blessed all people and all creatures. When he was dying he lifted his hands to bless the brethren, and men saw on them the marks of the nails. He had lived so close to Jesus, that he seemed to be crucified with Him.

Well, if we are to be changed to glorious beings hereafter, we must be changed now, by being close to Jesus, and keeping in touch with Him. We read in the Gospel much about the touch of the Lord, it did many things. *It changed coldness to warmth.* There is a kind of secret writing in invisible ink, which leaves the paper white and clear, but if the paper is held to the fire the writing appears. We are like the white paper, goodness, faith, and the virtues do not show in us ; then the touch of Christ's warm love brings out the good in us—God's handwriting. The disciples were cold, and weak, and frightened, Jesus touched them, breathed on them, laid His hands upon them, and their coldness was made warmth, and they became full of fire and zeal and courage.

The touch of Jesus made *crooked things straight.* One day they brought to Jesus a woman with a twisted, crooked body, and He made her straight. This is what He is always doing. There are people with crooked souls, characters, tempers, lives, and

Change.

God says—I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight. This life is full of crooked places and crooked things. We sometimes say—Things seem to go crooked with me, and so they do. There are crooked paths in which it is very difficult to walk straight, or to find our way. There are crooked ways of business, where it is hard to be straightforward. There is much crooked, uphill work, where it is almost impossible to climb straight. There are crooked tempers which are very hard to keep in order, crooked tongues very difficult of control. The touch of Jesus will make them straight. There are some who are bound down by a weight of sorrow, all the life seems to be crushed out of them, everything seems crooked, wrong, out of joint. For such there is only one cure; we must take the grief to Jesus, and keep in touch with Him. Perhaps He will not remove our sorrow, but He will teach us how to bear it. This world is a very crooked place for everyone to walk in, the voices of temptation are always trying to lead us out of the straight path. There is only one thing for us to do, we must keep close to Jesus. He promises that He will go before us, and make the crooked places straight.

The touch of Jesus *makes hard things soft*. Nothing but the touch of the Saviour can soften

Change. So

a hard heart. All the teaching, and the preaching, and the laws, and the prisons, are useless alone; many criminals grow harder the oftener they are punished, as fire hardens clay. Nothing could make S. Peter weep but the look, the touch, of Jesus. Nothing can bring forth the waters of penitential tears from the stony heart but the rod of Jesus Christ.

The touch of Jesus *makes unclean things clean*. They brought a leper to Christ, one who was foul and loathsome to himself and others; no doctor could cure him, all medicines were useless, but he wanted to be clean, and Jesus touched him, and his flesh became as the flesh of a little child. So it is with the sinner now. He is foul, loathsome, to the world, to society, a moral plague spot infecting the home and the parish. Who can cure him? Not the schools, and the prisons, and reformatories, and refuges by themselves. They can wash the body, but not the soul. If a sinner wants to be made clean he must go to Jesus, and He will touch him, and he will be changed, and his heart will become as the heart of a little child. A drop of water lies foul and filthy in a dirty road, the morning sun sucks it up into the air, the winds carry it to the clouds, and at last it drops on a mountain top a flake of pure white snow. So it is with the par-

doned soul, the love of Jesus lifts it up out of the mire and filth of evil, higher and higher, and purifies it, washes it, till it is whiter than snow.

The touch of Jesus *turns weakness to strength*. The touch of Jesus turned water into wine, and that miracle is repeated over and over again. Out of weakness we are made strong, to bear and suffer, to struggle and endure. Happy is he who can say with truth—I can do all things through Christ, Who strengtheneth me. A young girl worked in a large cotton mill, where there was much bad company, and vile talk and unbelief. The girl went through it all saintly, gentle, uncomplaining, giving good for evil, gentle words for rough. People wondered what was the secret of her beautiful life. One day she died, and they found a gold locket hung over her heart containing a picture of Jesus, crowned with thorns, that was her secret. Brethren, always have Jesus next your heart, and you will be strong to bear all things, to hope all things, to do all things.

The touch of Jesus *turns dross to gold*. It was the dream of the mediæval chemists that they would discover a substance which would turn base metal into gold. It was only a dream, but the touch of Jesus is a reality. He touches poor human nature, and it becomes glorified. He touches our weak

Change. so

prayers, and faint desires for good, and feeble efforts after holiness, and makes them strong. He turns denying Peter and doubtful Thomas to heroes of courage and faith. He clothes our feebleness with His strength, and He will one day change our vile bodies and make them like unto His glorious body.

“Tarnished forms, torn leaves, but Thou canst mend them,
Thou Thine own completeness canst unfold
From our imperfections, and wilt end them,
Dross consuming, turning dust to gold.”

The touch of Jesus *changes sorrow to peace*. Jesus does not always take away our sorrow; He does not save our loved one from the grave, nor give us back what we have lost, but He does better. Out of the stony rock of our sorrow He brings the sweet honey of joy, the sweet water of grace. He teaches us to take our stony griefs, and with them build Bethel, the sanctuary of God. He teaches us to look up at the black sky of trouble and see the bright rainbow of hope, to lift our tearful eyes from earth's sorrows and see God's face, and be satisfied.

Yes, we must all be changed, and that change can only come by feeling the touch of Jesus. How can we do this? In two ways, in prayer, and in the Blessed Sacrament. When we pray, really and

truly, we touch Jesus with the hand of faith, and He touches us with the hand of power. We are close to Him, and we are changed people. When Jesus prayed, the form of His countenance was changed, He was close to His Heavenly Father. Look at a frightened child in a crowd, and then look at it happy in its mother's arms, its face is changed. Watch a young girl talking to her lover, she is transfigured, her face is changed. So those who talk with God, who cling lovingly to Him in prayer, are changed.

In the Blessed Sacrament we are nearest to Jesus, lying on His breast, like S. John, clasping His feet, like Mary. Then Jesus says to us—I will, be thou clean; I will wash thee, and thou shalt be whiter than snow; My strength is sufficient for thee, and we are changed. The child brings its copybook or drawing to the teacher; it is very imperfect, perhaps, but if he sees that the child has done its best the teacher gives a few touches with a master hand, and the feature of the writing is changed. All our work is weak and poor enough, but if we do our best, Jesus touches it with a Master hand, He writes between the lines, He corrects our poor picture of life, and so day by day we are being changed, till that day when we shall be like Him, and see Him as He is.

Sermon XII.

CASTING THE NET.

(Eastertide.)

S. JOHN XXI. 3.

“Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee.”

FISHING was S. Peter's old trade, and when he became an Apostle he did not forget his former calling. When it was time to preach, he was ready, when it was time to work for his bread, he was prepared. He did not neglect his religion for his work, nor his work for his religion. That Sea of Galilee is a picture of the sea of life, the world in which we live and work. We are all meant to be Apostles of Jesus in some way or other; some as Priests, others as laymen. God means us all to be fishers of men, to help our brethren to draw men out of the waves of the world into the net of the Church.

✻ Casting the Net.

“Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing.” The Apostles had lately gone through a terrible time, Good Friday and its tragedy were still fresh in their memory. The Master had gone from them, they had seen His Body laid in the tomb. True, He had risen from the dead, but they scarcely understood what that meant, and the future was full of anxiety and fear. But S. Peter did not sit down idle and mourning. He went to his work; he said—I go a fishing. So it is with us all. We are out on the waves of this troublesome world, full of doubts and anxieties. We know not what the future has in store for us, we have had our sorrows, we have seen the grave close over our dear ones, we have lost what was very precious to us, and life may seem very dark. But it is useless to sit down by the grave of our buried hope. “Life is real, life is earnest,” life means doing our duty, doing our work. Religion is not dreaming, nor mere idle gazing up into Heaven. We must be up and doing, we must go forth to our work and to our labour until the evening, we must go a fishing, and cast the net.

“S. Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee.” There is nothing so strong as the force of example, nothing like giving a lead. The soldier in battle says—

Casting the Net. 50

Who will follow me? and one man steps to the front, then others follow. A man puts his name on a subscription list, others read the name, and do likewise. Walk in the right way, and you will be sure of company. "I go a fishing. We also go with thee." Let a man make up his mind, let him say—I am going to Church every Sunday; others will say—We also go with thee. Let one say—I am going to Holy Communion regularly; others will answer—We also go with thee. Let one say—I am going to do some good in my parish, I am going to set my face against all bad language, to think of the souls of those whom I employ; others will answer—We also go with thee. If a man makes up his mind to give regularly to some Church work, to missions, or religious education, or what not, others will say—We also go with thee. There is nothing so strong as example.

The disciples toiled all night, and caught nothing. That is a parable of our life here. It is night time, we cannot see clearly, or understand much. We are all workers in the dark, casting our net into the wide waters, and we seem to catch nothing. Very few see the harvest here from the seed they have sown, or gather the fruit of their toil and trouble. Why is it? Because this life is a night time, we see as in a glass, darkly. We have not to think

✧ Casting the Net.

about results, not about the harvest, but about sowing good seed ; not about the number of fish, but about casting the net. It is not for us to think of the result of the battle, but to keep on fighting bravely. We have to toil all through the night, all through our lifetime, whether we catch anything or not. Many a worker is tempted at times to say—I have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing. The preacher delivers his message year after year, and he seems to see little or no fruit. The teacher in school toils on day after day, and seems to find no result. The author writes books, and sends them forth into the world, and no one seems to care. There is no harvest to ripen, no crown of reward. The world seems no better, and the worker lies down to die, saying—I have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing. But it is not so. “The healing of the world is its nameless saints.” The greatest things are done by unknown Christian souls, by unknown mothers’ prayers, and sisters’ patience, and parents’ self-denial. The people live and die unknown, but their work remains. “Not all who seem to fail have failed indeed.” No one ever fishes with God’s net without taking something, no one ever does a good work without doing someone good.

Casting the Net. 50

"Others shall sing the song,
Others shall right the wrong,
Finish what I began,
And all I fail of, win.
What matter I or they,
Mine or another's day,
So the right word be said,
And life be sweeter made?"

What we have to do is what S. Peter did, to go a fishing, to do our own work patiently, perseveringly. We must not say—It is of no use, I cannot succeed, I never catch anything; we must go on doing our duty. Many neglect the work which lies straight before them, whilst they look for work elsewhere. An artist spent much time in searching for some precious sandal wood, from which he might carve a figure of the Blessed Virgin. He found none; but in a dream he was shown an oak log lying on the hearth, and he took it and carved it into a thing of beauty. Do not waste time in looking for some great work, never mind the sandal wood, and the gold, and the silver, there are always common oak logs and common clay handy, work with them, carve a noble life out of rough, everyday labour, do your best with the material God gives you. Yet for all of us there are times when we toil all the night and take nothing, when the net drags heavily; the work is hard, and we seem

✠ Casting the Net.

to make no progress. Then, if we cry to the Lord in our distress, the change comes. "When the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore." That is true of our life, night and depression, morning and Jesus. "Sorrow may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."

"The night becomes as day
When from the heart we say,
May Jesus Christ be praised."

The disciples knew not that it was Jesus. So it is with us. Jesus is close to us, directing, guiding, ordering, and we do not see Him, we know not that it is Jesus. Jesus is always on the shore, guiding our work, and often we know not that it is Jesus. "Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat?" And they answered, no. Jesus asks us the same question—Children, have ye any meat? And we answer, no; give us day by day our daily bread for our bodies, the Bread of Heaven for our souls. He asks—Children, have ye any strength? And we must answer, no; we are not sufficient of ourselves, Lord, undertake for us, without Thee we can do nothing. He asks—Children, have ye any knowledge? And we must answer, no; we are as little children, and know not how to go out or come in, teach us the way of Thy Commandments. Jesus

Casting the Net. 5-

asks—Children, have ye any light? And we must answer, no ; all is dark and mysterious, Thou, Who art the Light of the World, lighten our eyes.

Then Jesus showed the Apostles where to fish, and how to cast the net. By themselves they toiled all night, and took nothing, with Christ they caught a multitude of fishes. Ah, brethren, we cannot work alone, or stand alone, nor live alone, let Jesus Christ be with you in all things. He is never out of place, be it in the fishing boat, or the workshop, or the house of business, or the receipt of custom. Take Jesus into your life and your work, and you will prosper.


Of all the Apostles, S. John alone recognized Jesus, and said, "It is the Lord." It was because he loved the Lord best of all. If we love Jesus we shall recognize Him in all the events of our lives. Are we prosperous? We shall see His Hand, and say—It is the Lord. Are we sorrowful? We shall recognize the loving chastening of the Master, and say—It is the Lord, let Him do what seemeth Him best. In our working strength we shall see Jesus beside us, and say—It is the Lord. In the hour of weakness and death we shall know that we are not alone, and our last words will be—Even so, come, Lord Jesus, it is the Lord.

Sermon XIII.

BETHEL.

GENESIS XXVIII. 10.

“And Jacob went out from Beersheba, and went towards Haran.”

HE story of Jacob is a wonderfully human story. It is the story of a young man going forth to seek his fortunes. The time comes when the home nest is too small for all, and the children must seek a wider sphere. So the son goes east or west, north or south, it does not seem to matter whither. But it does matter, our whole future may depend on how we start in life. Jacob went towards Haran, but he little knew how his journey would end, and what would happen to him. So it is with all our journeys, Saul of Tarsus little knew, on his way to Damascus, what the end of the journey would mean to him. Simon the Cyrenian, coming out of the country to Jerusalem,

Bethel. 50

little knew that he should bear the Cross of Jesus. Elijah, when he went a day's journey into the wilderness, did not expect to see God's angel, and to eat food from Heaven. We never know what the end of a journey may bring. God orders our journeys, like everything else, it is not chance which makes us travel. East or west, God always directs our ways. When blind Bartimæus went out one day, as usual, to sit by the wayside at Jericho and beg, he did not know that he should meet with Jesus, and receive his sight. Zacchæus went forth, and climbed a palm tree out of mere curiosity, and he was destined to receive Jesus into his home, and heart, and to hear the comforting words, "This day is salvation come to thine house."

So it was with Jacob, because he wanted to find Laban, and he found God, and built Bethel, the House of God. "He lighted on a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set." Jacob saw nothing in the place except a convenient spot to sleep in, and he chose one of its stones for a pillow. But God made his bed, and when his eyes were closed in sleep, God opened his senses to see great things. Jacob at this time knew little, probably, about God, he was too busy about worldly matters. He was a sharp man of business, he had outwitted the dull, slow Esau, and had got the

❖ Bethel.

birthright and the blessing. Suddenly Jacob found himself face to face with God. He saw a ladder set up from earth to Heaven, and the angels ascending and descending upon it, and the Lord stood above it. The ladder had always been there, and the angels also, and the Lord had always stood above it, but Jacob did not know it before, and some of us do not know it now. We are so busy with earthly things, that we give no thought to heavenly things, we have shut up all spiritual thoughts out of our lives. We have buried the Bible under the ledger, and locked God out of the money-box.

Well, there comes a time to everyone, at least once in his life, when he meets God face to face. Call it conversion, or conviction, or revelation, or what you will. The man learns that there is another world beside this, and that there is a ladder, a staircase between them, and that the life here and the life there are very close together. Jacob found God that night at Bethel, Saul of Tarsus found Him that day on the Damascus road, the penitent thief found Him on the Cross. Some have found God in an hour of terrible peril, on board the sinking ship, in the fierce grip of the waves, in the crash of a railway accident, in the smoke and flame of a burning house, and perhaps only on a dying bed.

Bethel. 50

When Jacob's eyes were shut to the world he saw heavenly things. Some of us are so taken up with looking on the earth that our eyes never see Heaven, just as those who are always gazing on the ground never see the stars. God, in His mercy, gives us quiet times, as He gave to Jacob at Bethel. It may be when we lie on our bed, or illness strikes us down, and some great sorrow falls upon us, and the hour is very dark because our sun is set. We tarry there all through the night of sorrow, but we see heavenly things, the ladder set up between earth and Heaven, the angels going and coming, and the Lord above all. We learn that there is a spiritual world not far from us, and that there is always a ladder between the two. We learn that we men and women are not the whole of God's creatures who do His will. There are angels busy in His service, close to us, about our path, and about our bed, and the Lord above all, King of men and of angels, guiding, ruling our lives. We learn that this world is but one little room in God's great House; when we die we go step by step up the ladder, borne by angel hands, into another room, another world.

Brethren, learn to look beyond this little life, this little world of petty cares, and works, and plans, see how close the next world is to us, how close the angels, how close God Himself. Learn

that we who are baptized members of God's holy Church are one great family and household, some at this end of the ladder, others at that; some with saints and angels in Paradise, others with the cares and labours of this world; some out in the wilderness journey, others safe in the Promised Land, but all one, all one. Learn, too, that our life is angel-guarded. Our Lord Jesus Christ taught this very clearly. Your little children have their guardian angels to help them; you men and women, fighting the battle of life, have your warrior angels on your side; you sad mourners in some Gethsemane of sorrow have strengthening angels of comfort. Our lives, our labours, our sorrows, are angel-helped and angel-guarded. We realize this most in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. There we kneel at the foot of the ladder set up to Heaven, and we are close to the angels, for we say, "With angels and archangels, and all the company of Heaven, we laud and magnify Thy glorious Name." And the Lord is above all, blessing His people, and so we cry, "In Thy presence is the fulness of joy." Jacob had got the blessing, and at Bethel he learnt what it meant, God's presence, God's care, His ministry of angels. So we received our blessing in Holy Baptism, we were made the children of God, members of Christ, and inheritors of the King-

Bethel. 20

dom of Heaven, and we began to climb the ladder whose top reaches Heaven. Learn also that God is always very near to us, and that we can touch His Hand in Prayer ; and that Heaven is very near to us, and if we live a good life we can breathe the sweet atmosphere of Heaven even now.

God made a promise to Jacob, He said, "I am with thee in all places whither thou goest ; I will not leave thee till I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." What God promised Jacob, He promises us. He says, "I will never leave thee" ; He tells His Church, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." We are not orphans alone in the world, God has not gone afar off, He is ever present with His Church, in her Sacraments and services, her prayers and praises ; wherever two or three are gathered together in His Name, there is He in the midst of them. We may feel lonely and depressed sometimes, and say—I am alone in the world, nobody cares for me, but it is not true. Jesus has promised never to leave us, we are members of His great family, the Church, and we can kneel together with our brethren in the sanctuary, and pray for one another. Nobody cares for us ! Jesus cares, and that is sufficient.

God and His holy angels were with Jacob all through his life. So it is with us, look up, and see

as Bethel.

God above all your life, overruling it by His Divine Providence, in your work, your home, your joys and sorrows, see the Lord above all, and His angels ministering to your needs. Jacob waked out of sleep, and said, "Surely the Lord was in this place, and I knew it not." Many of us are like that, when we wake out of the sleep of indifference, or careless, or unbelief, we learn that God was close to us, and we knew it not. God is always close to us, His Hand is always directing our ways, and we do not know it. We make our own plans, and they miscarry, the house which was made so strong for ourselves falls to pieces, and we do not understand, and we ask—Why is it? The Lord was in the place, and we knew it not. There is no place in our lives where the Lord is not, we are always on holy ground, close to God. Sometimes in Church we see people smiling with foolish faces, their ears deaf to the Gospel message; surely these have need to say—The Lord was in this place, and we knew it not.

Jacob took the stone of his pillow and set it up, and consecrated it with oil, and called the place Bethel, God's House. Brethren, we should be always setting up Bethel all through life's journey. We should ever be building memorials of God's love, and mercy, and Providence, instead of monuments

Bethel. so

to our own cleverness and success. The Romans talked of marking a fortunate day with a white stone; there are days in all our lives to be marked and remembered, when we ought to raise up Bethel, a stone of witness. There is a Baptism, when God made us His own children; raise up Bethel, and say—This is the House of God, this is the Gate of Heaven. There is our Confirmation, when God girded us for the battle; we should raise up an altar of thanksgiving, and call it Jehovah-Nissi—The Lord my banner. There was the time of our great trouble, or anxiety, or want, and God helped us, and fed us, and comforted us; let us raise an altar, and call it Jehovah-Jireh—The Lord will provide. There were times when God forgave us a great sin, and turned our hearts from disobedience to the wisdom of the just; let us raise a memorial, and call it Jehovah-Shalom—The Lord will send peace. And what of our sorrows? Shall we not thank God for them. Yes,

“Out of my stony griefs, Bethel I'll raise.”

So shall we climb the ladder, angels will watch us, and strengthen us, and the Lord will be above all, ruling and keeping us in all our ways.

Sermon XIV.

DAILY BREAD.

S. MATTHEW VI. II.

“Give us this day our daily bread.”

EVERYTHING in the Bible points to one lesson, the duty of living for the day. In the Old Testament we read how Israel gathered the manna, their daily bread, day by day. They took a day's journey as God led them. In the New Testament Jesus teaches us to ask daily for our daily bread, He bids us take no thought for the morrow, for sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof; if we would seek after God, we are told that now is the accepted time, to-day, if ye will hear His voice, now is the day of salvation, not to-morrow, not the future, but to-day, now. We must live by the day, our life is a daily progress, a daily fight, a daily work, strengthened by daily bread. We begin this prayer with Our Father, and

Daily Bread. 50

we ask Him to give us our daily bread. This, then, is a family prayer, we are as children round our Father, waiting to be fed, clothed, taught, waiting for all our needs to be supplied. Daily bread means all things requisite and necessary for us.

Here is our first lesson. We ask God for our daily bread because it is God's bread, all things come from Him, we are utterly dependent upon Him. The infant depends upon its mother for food, the child on its parents, but all depend upon God. The man who is well fed, who never misses a meal, or wants for bread, does not always remember this. You ask a child who gives it bread, and he will tell you that father and mother give it. Who gives it to them? and the child answers, the baker. Who gives it to the baker? and he answers, the miller. Who gives it to the miller? and he tells you, the farmer; and the ground gives it to the farmer. But who gives it to the ground? Ah, we do not go far enough. It is God Who makes the earth bring forth and bud, Who giveth bread to strengthen man's heart. It is God Who feeds the cattle upon a thousand hills, Who feeds you and me with our daily bread.

"Back of the flour is the mill,
And back of the mill, the wheat and the sheaves,
And the sun, and the Father's Will."

☞ Daily Bread.

Learn, then, your dependence on God, and be thankful. I wonder whether that good old-fashioned custom of saying grace, of asking a blessing on our food, is dying out. So many good things have died out in these days. Never mind whether you have a rich feast, or a single crust, it is God's gift, thank Him, ask a blessing. We thank an earthly friend who gives us a dinner, should we not thank God for our daily bread?

We have in these days grown so conceited with our knowledge, our discoveries, our up-to-dateness, that we often ignore God altogether. We call ourselves bread-winners, we say that we invented this or that. But we could not win bread if God did not provide it, nor could we invent anything unless God taught us. You can grind wheat into flour, and make a loaf of bread, but you could not make a single grain of wheat. No, we must go back to God the Father, the Feeder, the Giver of our daily bread.

Israel was fed by God in the wilderness for forty years, and we call it a miracle. But God feeds us in the wilderness of this world now. What has kept the world alive all through the ages? God's care, God's bread, our daily bread. We call it *our* daily bread; it is ours not by right, but by favour, it is God's gift to us. It is ours only if

Daily Bread. 50

it is asked of God, and blessed by God. To steal bread, or the money to buy it, does not make it ours; it is someone else's, it has no blessing on it. If we live by gambling, the food we eat is stolen; if we make money dishonestly in trade or business, the food we eat is not our bread, it is not blessed. The man who grows rich by grinding the faces of the poor, by the sweat of slaves, by the labour of the starving seamstress, and the ill-nourished child, must not dare to talk about our daily bread. Here, then, is our first lesson, our daily wants are supplied by God, it is God's bread, God's clothing, God's care and protection, and we must ask for these things, and give thanks for them.

Give *us* our daily bread. There is a lesson of unselfishness. We are all members of one great family, God, our Father, is in the midst of us, caring for all. We must think of others, and not stretch forth greedy hands, and cry—Give *me*. There are others hungry beside us, others weak and tired as well as ourselves. We are one family, and we must not jostle and scramble and fight for the best blessings. God gives *us* our daily bread, even the bad, disobedient children, the unthankful, those who hate us, and speak evil of us, give them, give all, give us.

The selfish world is like the young cuckoo in the

Daily Bread.

strange bird's nest, which pushes out all the others, and gets all the food for itself. Its cry is—Give me. We are all God's children, and we must say—Give us. We must not look only on our own things, but on the things of others. God will never hear or answer a selfish prayer. The prayers which are first heard are those offered for others. Look at the Prayer Book, which contains the teaching of the Church, its prayers are all unselfish; it teaches us to say—Give us, guide us, lead us, have mercy upon all men. Our great cry is ever going up from the Church—Our Father, give us, Thy children, our daily bread, daily pardon, daily strength. We cannot buy this blessing, the richest man must come as a beggar. A poor woman saw a bunch of grapes in a rich man's hot-house, and desired to have them for her sick child. She worked hard till she had earned half-a-crown, and this she offered to the gardener as the price of the grapes. He only laughed at her. Then the woman pawned her last blanket, and offered the money to the gardener, who angrily drove her away. But the rich man's daughter saw and heard what took place, and said to the woman, "You are mistaken, my father is not a merchant, who sells, but a rich man, who gives." And she placed the grapes in her hand.

Your work, your cleverness, your money, will do

Daily Bread. 50

much, but we can do nothing without God. You may starve in a gold mine or a palace, you may perish of thirst, while your pockets are full of treasure. Our Father, give us our *daily* bread. Not to-morrow's bread, we are not taught to ask that our future wants may be supplied. Our business is with to-day. God never gives out the day's work, or trial, or burden, two days ahead. God says—Live to-day, leave to-morrow to Me. People climbing up a steep mountain do not look at the far-off top, towering in the distance; if they did, they would feel that they should never get there. They climb a step at a time, they cut a place for their feet in the ice a step at a time, and at last they reach the end of the journey.

Life is like that, a step at a time, a day at a time. If we look too far ahead we shall neglect the road at our feet. The rich fool in the parable talked about pulling down his barns and building greater for his future wealth, and the rebuke came to him, "This night shall thy soul be required of thee." Everyone who is planning for a far-off future is a fool, whether he is rich or poor. We have to live for to-day, that is all. But ought we not to provide for the future? Certainly, and the best way to do so is to do our duty to-day. The worker who spends to-day in wondering how he

Daily Bread.

shall get through to-morrow's work, does nothing. Work your work to-day, then you will be fit for to-morrow's work if you see it. How do men climb a ladder? A step at a time. That is the way to get to the top of anything, even to Heaven itself. If you hear an old man of ninety talking about what he will do twenty years hence you smile at his folly. But it is just as foolish to talk of to-morrow, or next year; ask for to-day's bread, to make you strong to do to-day's duty.

From the very beginning God gave us life a day at a time. He says, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be," and there we see God's love and mercy. We could not bear the burden of the years, so God, in His mercy, only gives us the burden of to-day. If we knew all that we must face, and suffer, and give up during the present year we could not face it. If the soldier going to the wars could foresee all the fighting, and suffering, and agony, and disaster lying before him, he could not go on, so God gives it out a day at a time.

"And never, I believe, on all the way
Will burdens be so deep,
Or pathways lie so threatening and so steep,
But we can go, if by God's power,
We only bear the burden of the hour."

Again, we are taught a lesson of contentment.

Daily Bread. 50

We are not to ask for luxuries or abundance, but for daily bread, nothing more, sufficient for the day's needs, nothing more. The contented man eats a crust with relish, whilst the discontented finds no flavour in anything. Let us learn to say with the great philosopher, Socrates, "How many things there are which I do not want."

Once more. Our Father gives us daily bread for our souls, Bread from Heaven. There is a disease which causes a man to waste away and starve, although he eats food. So many a man's body is fed, but his soul is starved. Let our prayer be—Give us the daily bread of righteousness, the daily bread of God's Word, the sincere milk of the Gospel, the blessed Bread of God in the Holy Sacrament. "Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be satisfied."

Sermon XV.

DAILY PRAYER.

S. LUKE XI. I.

“One of His disciples said unto Him, Lord, teach us to pray.”



ONE would have thought that our Lord's disciples, of all people in the world, would have known how to pray. They saw their Master daily, they heard His teaching, and yet they knew not how to pray. It is the same to-day. There are thousands of people who go to Church, and have Prayer Books, and manuals of private devotion, who do not know how to pray. Anyone can say his prayers, but many cannot pray. Understand, first of all, that prayer is the most important thing in your life, it is everything, your eternity depends upon it. Some of us do not understand this ; they say they are too busy to pray. Would you tell me that you are too busy to eat, to sleep, to live? Well, you cannot live without prayer.

Daily Prayer. 50

You say—I have my work to do. Prayer is your chief work, the first and most important thing in your life. You cannot do any other kind of work properly without it. If a man lives and works without prayer, he is living and working in the dark.

Yes, prayer is everything. Your little works, and labours, and plans will all be done presently, and your body will be a handful of dust; but the life of your soul will go on for ever, and that soul is kept alive by prayer. Prayer is the sword with which to stay the giants of sin and temptation, prayer is the fire to warm a cold heart, prayer is the kerchief to wipe away all tears, prayer is the comfort of our loneliness, and the staff to guide us. “It is our Gethsemane prayers which bring our angels.”

Some people, of course, never pray at all. It is a terrible thing not to be on speaking terms with God. The shipwrecked mariner on the desert island tells us that the worst part was the loneliness, the having no one to speak to. The prayerless man does not speak to God, and so he is lonely in a lonely world, and he has no real friend to talk with. You see people who quarrel with their friends, and say of them—We do not speak now. That is bad enough, but to quarrel with God, and turn away

→ Daily Prayer.

from our best Friend, and never to speak to Him, is worst of all.

Well, some people never pray, many more pray in a wrong fashion, they put their prayers upside down, like little children playing with wooden letters. These do not speak plainly to God, their prayer is only a stammer. All of us need to ask the Master, "Lord, teach us to pray."

How, then, should we pray? First, *regularly*. We must pray daily, not by fits and starts. We do not say that we had food yesterday, and so shall not need any to-day. Our bodies cannot live without daily bread, our souls cannot live without daily prayer. Prayer should be as regular as our breathing, our eating, our sleeping. Israel gathered manna for one day at a time, not for six days, so we must pray for one day at a time. Never begin a day without prayer, without putting yourself in God's Hands. Never lie down to sleep without prayer, death is very close to us in sleep. "Death, and his brother, sleep," are almost twins, they are so much alike. Pray at night for God and His holy angels to be with you. Pray also during the day, if possible. You say you are busy in the fields. Well, what hinders you from praying in the fields? You are busy in the shop; cannot God hear you in the shop? God can hear you in the silence of the fields,

Daily Prayer. ~~so~~

or the noise of the factory. When the tempter comes, when the bad thought, the evil desire, the fierce temptation attacks you, stop, and pray silently, if, may be, only one word. A sailor on board a whaling vessel was asked where he could find a place to pray in, and he answered that he could always find a quiet place at the mast head. Whenever the heart desires to pray, it can always find a place to pray in.

Next, *pray persistently*, keep on praying. That is what S. Paul means by praying without ceasing. God does not do things in a hurry, He does not give us anything on the instant. Jacob wrestled with the angel all night, and would not let him go till he had the blessing. That means persistent prayer. You prayed yesterday, and you have not had your answer ; go on praying, never let go God's Hand. Foolish children sow a seed to-day, and cry to-morrow because it has not grown. The wise say—Wait. Some people give up praying because they are not answered at once ; we must wait, we must keep on working at our prayers, and wait for the seed to grow, the harvest to ripen. Some of our prayers, many of our prayers, are only answered in the next world, many of our harvests are only gathered in Paradise. We must persevere, and we shall reap if we faint not. Some of us are reaping

☞ Daily Prayer.

to-day the harvest sown by the prayers of good men long since dead.

Next, *pray with faith and understanding*. Believe what you say, and mean what you say. Many hours are wasted in Church, in school, at home, at what is called prayer-time. In Church some people gabble the words of the Prayer Book, and neither think, nor feel, nor understand, nor believe. This is not prayer. In school children gabble a form of prayer which they know by heart, and hurry through it without thought, but this is not prayer. By the bed-side we yawn over meaningless words, and hasten to get them over, but this is not prayer, it is merely wasted time. Never be in a hurry with God, never insult Him by showing that you want to hurry out of His presence.

Some people play at working, and the work is useless. Many play at praying, instead of working at it. If you want to work well you must put two hands to it, and all your mind and strength into it. If you pray rightly you must put your heart and soul into your prayer. If you remember that everything depends upon prayer, here and hereafter, your life, your happiness, your welfare, for all eternity, you will be earnest about it. Either you believe in God, or you do not; either you believe that God can do all things, or you do not; if you believe,

Daily Prayer. 50

you will keep on asking, clinging, wrestling, till the blessing comes.

There is an old saying, "Think before you speak." I would say to you, think before you pray. Understand what you are going to say. You are about to speak to Almighty God, take heed what you say. Before you pray in Church get your thoughts together, your mind into a state of devotion, your heart in tune with the service. Do not rush into God's presence unprepared. That is why it is such a pity to come late to Church, we cannot prepare ourselves. Then, pray believing that God hears, and will answer as seems best to Him. Do not tempt God by praying to see if He will answer. Do not act like a begging letter-writer, sending petitions on the chance of their being answered, or like a man knocking at the door of an empty house on the chance of being heard. We say of a stranger, I will try him, perhaps he will help me. We say of a friend, I know that he will help me. Well, is God a stranger to you, or a friend? If you love Him, trust Him, believe in Him, you pray, not hoping, but knowing that you are heard, and that the right answer will come.

Next, *pray unselfishly*. Many people are most selfish when on their knees. What a clamour of greedy, selfish desires most prayers are. Many

☞ Daily Prayer.

praying people are like a crowd of unruly children struggling to get gifts. We shall never pray aright till we have learnt to cut out *I* and *Me* from our prayers as much as possible. In the Lord's Prayer, which is the model for all men, there is not much about self; we are taught to pray that God's glory may be increased, His Name hallowed, His Kingdom enlarged, His will done. Yet how little some of us think about God's glory in our prayers; it is always, give *me* my daily bread, give me what I want, that position, that happiness, all this is of the earth, earthy. Our prayer never gets any higher than this world, it is so overweighted that it cannot rise to Heaven. Brethren, learn to pray more for God's glory, that His way may be known to all nations, His Church increased all over the world, that the earth may be filled with the knowledge of God as the waters cover the sea, that His Name may be hallowed by you and all men. Put God first in your prayers, as in all else. A man once went to a saintly teacher and complained that for thirty years he had prayed that he might enjoy the comforts of religion, and all in vain. Then, said the teacher—Go home now, and pray that God may be glorified.

Then, I would say, pray for others, do not be always clamouring for your own daily bread. I

Daily Prayer. 20

suppose you pray for the members of your family ; then be more liberal, pray for your parish, pray for the whole Church, pray for those who have wronged you, and quarrelled with you. That is intercession, the highest form of prayer. Abraham interceded for the cities of the plain ; they were abominably wicked, and that was just the reason for praying for them. Moses interceded for the Children of Israel, who were disobedient, ungrateful, and rebellious, and so there was all the more reason for praying for them. Above all, our Master, Jesus, interceded for His murderers, and prayed, as they pierced Him, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Oh, brethren, when your enemies pierce you with hard words and cruel judgments, with ingratitude and falsehood, do you pray so, "Father, forgive them" ?

Our Lord's great work in Heaven is one of intercession, He ever lives to make intercession for us, and we shall never be like Him unless we intercede on earth. The world will never be better till there are more praying, interceding Christians. They tell us that the Eucalyptus tree, growing in the deadly swamp, sweetens the poisoned air around it. So a praying man, an interceding man, in a parish, sweetens and purifies the place, and brings down a blessing upon it. You can tell a neglected farm

☞ Daily Prayer.

by the weeds and nettles in it, and you can tell a prayerless parish by the bad words, the dirty children, the slatternly women, the neglected houses. I would say then, finally, pray always, pray everywhere, pray regularly, reverently, persistently ; mean what you say, believing that your prayers are heard, Pray unselfishly, put God first, then your neighbour, yourself always last. Remember that prayer is everything in your life.


“Prayer from a living source within the will,
And beating up through all the bitter world,
Like fountains of sweet water in the sea,
Keeps you a living soul.”

Sermon XVI.

DAILY PRAISE.

PSALM LXXII. 15.

“Daily shall He be praised.”

HE Christian life is not only one of daily prayer, but of daily praise and thanksgiving. Some people are always asking for something, and never saying—Thank you. They eat their daily bread, and never give thanks for it; they sleep their nightly sleep, and never praise God in the morning. They do their daily work, and never return thanks to God, Who giveth all. Yes, gratitude, thanksgiving, is very rare. There are plenty of people to ask, few to show thankfulness; plenty to come and be healed, like the ten lepers, only one here and there to return and give thanks, like the one Samaritan. Men are very ungrateful towards their fellow-men. Parents toil and deny themselves for the sake of their children, and the

☞ Daily Praise.

children go out into the world and forget them. Men do a noble work for their country, and are neglected and passed over. When they are dead, men lay a wreath on their tomb, but never on their brow when living; they leave them to starve when alive, and erect a statue to them when dead.

Above all, ingratitude to God is most common. Many people take their blessings as a right, and never say—Thank you. There is a story of a prince who went to a hermit to ask his prayers. And the hermit said—I scarcely know what to pray for; you have health, and wealth, a happy family, a strong kingdom; perhaps the best thing I can ask for you is a thankful heart. Praise and thanksgiving are so often neglected because so few people are really thankful. Yet thanksgiving is the highest of duties, higher than prayer. Prayer may be, and often is, very selfish, thanksgiving is all for God, and nothing for self.

The Jews say that in Heaven there are two orders of angels, one of praise, the other of service, and the order of praise is the higher. "Daily shall He be praised." Yes, it is a daily duty to thank God for His blessings.

First, for a *beautiful world*. Never listen to the grumblers who find fault with the world; it is God's world, and therefore beautiful. Some people are

Daily Praise. 50

always looking into the back-yard of life instead of the garden, and so they see no flowers. Some people seem to live in a cellar, and so they say the sun never shines. Some people see no beauty in anything except a coin of the realm. I tell you, everything in God's world is beautiful except sin, and man makes that. Thank God daily for a beautiful world. You say you are poor, you have no estate, no grand park, no gardens, like the rich man. Why, you have the whole world, you can look up and see God's blue sky, flushed with sunshine, or spangled with stars, and the king cannot do more. It is the same sun which warms your cottage and shines on the king's palace. You have no gardens, you say. Your little strip of garden in the country gives you all you need, if heart's ease, contentment, grows there. You have what you need, and the millionaire has no more. Besides, the woods and the hedges are your garden, the flowers bloom for you as for the greatest, the birds sing for you as for the highest in the land. The corn ripens for the poorest as well as the richest. Look at a corn field in the spring time, everywhere God's choir of skylarks is singing above it, making melody over every acre. As it has been well said, "Every crust of English bread has been sung over in its birth in the green blade by the skylark." Only man is

☞ Daily Praise.

silent ; he eats his daily bread, and sings no song of thanksgiving. All God's world condemns him. If we are thankless, the birds which greet the sun-rising, the flowers sending up their incense to Heaven, the dew flashing in the sunshine, the waves laughing and singing on the shingle, reproach us. Perhaps you never notice these things, you never heed the birds' song, or the picture which the sun paints. Are you blind, are you deaf? Ah, a man must have the bird in his heart before he can understand its song in the bush ; he must have music in his soul before he can hear the great concert of nature. To the thankful heart God's world is beautiful, and our tongues break forth into a *Te Deum* : " We praise Thee, O God ; all the earth doth worship Thee, the Father everlasting.

Next, we ought daily to praise and thank God for giving us the *Church and His Sacraments*. We can never thank God enough for our Baptism into Christ's Holy Church, when we were made God's children by adoption. Jesus promised—I will not leave you orphans, I will come to you. He comes to us in Baptism, He takes us in His Arms, He bears us into His Family, the Holy Church, safe in His Father's House.

" All our wants by God supplied,
All our sins by Him forgiven."

Daily Praise. 50

We know that we are not fighting the battle of life alone, we are one family, living, fighting, praying, side by side. Are we sick with bodily illness? We have the comfort of the Christian ministry. Are we sick with sin? The Church has medicine to heal our sickness, the bitter medicine of repentance and confession, the healing balm of absolution. Are we weak, or easily tempted? Then the Church feeds us with the Blessed Food of the Altar, and makes us strong. Would we marry a wife? The Church blesses our union. Have we children to brighten our home? The Church blesses them at the font. Does death call us? The Church ministers to us in our last hours, and lays our bodies reverently in holy ground. For all these benefits we should praise and thank God daily.

Then we should daily praise God for giving us *the Bible*. Thousands of good books have been written, for which we should be thankful. I thank God for every good book I read which tells me a great truth, or gives me a beautiful thought, or raises an innocent laugh, or calls forth a ready tear. I am thankful for Shakespeare, and his world of beauty and wisdom, for Milton, in showing me Paradise lost and found; for the ancient writers who tell me of the brave days of old, of Greek and Roman, Saxon and Norman. I am thankful for

the great poets, who teach me lovely thoughts, and for the great musicians, who let me hear sweet music, but, above all, I thank God for the Bible. It is a whole library in itself. Never was there such another wise and beautiful and helpful and comforting book. Do we want pictures? Where can we find any like the Bible pictures? Abraham going sad-eyed to the mount of sacrifice; grey-haired Jacob blessing his sons; the babe Moses drawn from the water and clasped in his mother's arms; Ruth in the cornfield; David weeping over dead Absalom; Mary and the Holy Child in the stable; Jesus blessing the children; Jesus hanging upon the Cross. What other book can give us such pictures? Do we want stories? What other book can give us such stories as the Prodigal Son and the Lost Sheep, or the whole sweet story of the beautiful life of Jesus here among men? Do we want poetry? Where shall we find sweeter songs than those which David sang among the Bethlehem hills? Are we happy? We can sing unto the Lord with David, even a song of thanksgiving; we can rejoice with the Lord alway with S. Paul. Are we sad? We can mourn with Job in his sorrow, we can weep with Jesus in the Gethsemane of our pain, we can read of the Man of Sorrows, and find comfort in the pierced

Daily Praise. 50

hands. Are we dying? What other book can point the way, and lighten the valley of the shadow of death? Oh, thank God for the Bible. Perhaps some of you do not value it, and it lies unread and unheeded. In the early days of Australia men lived in their log huts, and ate and slept, and under their feet were gold mines, and they knew it not. We have something better in the Bible. "Thy words are better to me than thousands of gold and silver." Open your neglected Bible, read it, study it, pray over it, then thank God for it.

There was once an aged priest who shut himself up in a monastery, and thought it sinful to mingle with the world. One night he dreamed that he was at the gate of death, and that the angel who kept the gate said, "That is a beautiful world from which you have come." A beautiful world. And he had lived all those years and never knew it. Brethren, it is a beautiful world in which you live, a glorious Church to which you belong, the Bible which you possess is a blessed book. Thank God for these things; daily shall He be praised.

Then we should praise and thank God daily *for our home*. All of us have a home of some kind, some of us have a happy home. Did you ever thank God for it? The thing most like Heaven on this

earth is a godly, happy home, where the children's voices are like the angels singing before God's throne, where goodwill and good temper bind all the members together, where God is praised from the rising up of the sun unto the going down of the same, where prayer beautifies and sanctifies all. If you have such a home, thank God for it. Home without God is no home; a place where men only live to eat and drink and sleep in a sty of animals, not a home.

Then we should thank and praise God daily *for our sorrows*. Some of God's most precious things are only seen through our tears. Some of the most beautiful lessons are learnt in the twilight of sorrow, some of the sweetest songs are sung in the night of weeping. A certain German Baron stretched wires from tower to tower of his castle in order to make a great wind harp. In calm weather there was no sound, but when the wintry gales blew furiously the wires rang out glorious music. So tranquil, untroubled lives may be without music and song, but in the time of stormy trouble the beauty comes out. You may have to lie on a sick bed, unable to work for God, and you may say—Why should I thank God for this paralyzed back, or this useless limb, or these poor folded hands?

Daily Praise. So

Yes, thank God for them, He will receive your offering.


“ The humble offering
Of quiet folded hands,
Costly with suffering
He only understands,
To God more dear may be
Than eager energy.”

Sermon XVII.

DAILY STRENGTH.

PHILIPPIANS IV. 13.

"I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth Me."

" CAN do all things." That seems, at first sight, too much for any man to say. We know how weak and easily tempted we are, how soon led astray and cast down; we know how little we can do, and how imperfectly we do that little. Yet the man who said he could do all things was made of flesh and blood like ourselves, he was a man who had been tempted, who had fallen, who had sinned. I want you to think of all the Bible writers in this way, not as being different beings from you and me, but as tempted men, sinful men like ourselves. Yet these men tell us how out of weakness they were made strong. David was a man like us, he fell under severe temptation; he said his sin was ever before him, yet

Daily Strength. 30

he could say also that he put his trust in the Lord, and did not care what man could do unto him ; he said the Lord had made him stronger than his enemies, and that he should tread them under his feet ; he said that in the Name of the Lord he could do great acts, and go through all difficulties ; he said that he was strong to fight, but always in the Name of the Lord, always in the strength of God.

Here is S. Paul, who was once a persecutor of the Church, who looked on at S. Stephen's death, saying, "I can do all things." He knew his weakness, but he knew also where to look for strength. He was very humble, he called himself the least of the Apostles ; he said that the evil he would not, he did, and yet with all this he says, "I can do all things." How? "Through Christ, Which strengtheneth me."

Remember, we are of the same flesh and blood as S. Paul ; what he could do, we can do. Some people are always telling us what they cannot do. They say they are so easily tempted, that they cannot resist this or that wrong thing. They cannot keep away from bad company, or excess of strong drink ; they are so busy that they cannot find time to serve God ; they are so naturally quick-tempered that they cannot help resenting an injury ; they are so unfortunate that they cannot help being mournful and

☞ Daily Strength.

discontented ; they are so sensitive to pain that they cannot bear suffering patiently. That is not the right way to talk. S. Paul was a man like us, he was naturally very quick-tempered, he was a busier man than most, yet he could say, "I keep under my body ; I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content ; I can do all things through Christ, Which strengtheneth me."

Let no man say—I am too weak to lead a godly life. Of course you are too weak by yourself, but Christ's strength is sufficient for you. A cripple cannot walk without help, neither can a Christian. So we must say—

" I am weak, but Thou art mighty,
Hold me with Thy powerful hand."

"I can do all things through Christ, Which strengtheneth me." What things? First, we can *conquer our enemies*. None of us here is likely to be head of the army, or to go out and fight the battles of England ; we shall never wear the Victoria Cross, or the Distinguished Service Order, yet we can be more than conquerors through Him Who loves us. There are other and worse enemies at home than there are abroad, there is a battle for us to fight harder than was ever fought with Frenchman or Russian, Boer or savage. Ours is a daily

Daily Strength. 50

battle, which waxes on some days hotter than on others. Our enemies live, and are mighty; they thrust sore at us that we may fall, but we can feel, "In the Name of the Lord will I destroy them." Like David, we have a giant to fight; like David, we feel that we are not sufficient of ourselves; but, like David, we go forth to the fight in the Name of the Lord, and before it the giant temptation falls, as the Philistine fell before the sling of David.

Brethren, we all have our giants to fight, some of one kind, some of another. The best Christian has the hardest battles to fight. There is a really good man with a naturally passionate temper, that is his giant, and he has to fight it. Another has a melancholy, desponding nature, that is his giant, and he has to fight it. Another has very fierce and strong bodily passions, the flesh wars against the spirit, that is his giant, and he has to fight it. He is the best man who goes forth in the Name of the Lord and fights his battle. The best Christian is not he who never knows temptation, but who knows it and conquers it.

In the old days the men living on the Scottish borders were always fighting. The enemy was always crossing from one side or the other, and the guardians were always on the watch, their sword was seldom sheathed, and so these borderers were

☛ Daily Strength.

hardy, manly, brave men, because they were always fighting. Nothing toughens a Christian's religion like fighting with temptation. The best soldier is the man who has seen most wars, and the best Christian is he who has fought many a good fight. Blessed is the man who lives and dies fighting, who can say at the last, with that grand old soldier, S. Paul—I have fought a good fight; I have kept the faith.

“I can do all things.” What things? *We can bear our troubles patiently.* This world is an uphill journey for us all, and the way is often rough and stony, and that is just the point. We are going uphill, we are meant to climb upwards to the heavenly places, to struggle, to bear, to suffer, not to sleep in the valley among the flowers. God sends us sorrows to lift our thoughts upwards, He sends our cross that we may crucify our selfish wishes and desires. We cannot bear our sorrows by ourselves, and carry our cross alone, but with the Hand of Jesus helping us we can do all things, hope all things, endure all things. A foolish man looks at a field newly ploughed, and thinks it is cut to pieces and spoilt; the wise man sees that what seemed destruction is the cause of new life, that from the broken clods will spring the harvest. So when God sends us sorrows, He is cultivating our soul for

Daily Strength. 50

a harvest of righteousness. The ploughman cuts deep down into the soil with the ploughshare, but we do not call him cruel. God cuts deep into our life and wishes with the ploughshare of sorrow, but we must not doubt His love. Without God, we cry out against our troubles ; with God, we can cry, "I have learnt, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content ; I can do all things."

(Some of us fancy that our sorrows are greater than other people's, and would like to change with them. Ah, God knows the best cross for us to carry. There is an old story called the Mountain of Miseries. The writer dreamed that on a certain day all men were to bring their griefs and miseries and cast them down in a certain place. They came, each bearing his burden, and cast it down, till the burdens formed a mountain higher than the clouds. One carried a load of poverty, another one of sickness, another crippled limbs, another old age, another remorse and disappointment, and all were cast away. Then the dream changed, a command was given that as all must bear a burden of some kind, there should be an exchange made, and each person should go away carrying the burdens given to him. So some who had cast off poverty carried away sickness instead, for hunger they received thirst ; one who had cast away a deformed limb found

Daily Strength.

a rebellious son ; a woman exchanged an ugly face for a bad reputation. Another gave up white hairs to carry away asthma, and there was wailing and discontent on all sides. Then the writer teaches the lesson that our Heavenly Father knows best, and assigns to each soul the sphere to which it is best fitted, and the burden it best can bear. Yes, God sends our sorrows, and they are blessed angels in disguise.)

In the Crimean war a cannon ball fell inside a fort, and the ground was rent and torn by it, but from the rent gushed out a hidden spring of pure water. Ah, suffering rends our hearts with sorrow, but it discovers the well of salvation. Our hearts, like S. Peter's heart, must be broken by sorrow before the blessed waters of repentance can flow. I do not think we should pray for the removal of our troubles, but rather that we may be taught how to use them in the right way. The old Greek poet, heathen though he was, has given us a good model of prayer in those words : " Give us those things which are good for us, whether they are such things as we pray for, or such things as we do not pray for ; and remove from us those things that are hurtful, though they are such things as we pray for."

" I can do all things." Yet we feel that we can do so few things, and those such small things. But

Daily Strength. 50

perhaps God does not consider them small. If we are doing our duty, that is the greatest thing of all. What we are able to do may seem very small, and yet produce great results. It is a small thing to sow tiny seeds in a field, but the act produces a glorious harvest. To lay one stone upon another is a small thing, but there may grow from it the splendid Cathedral. A simple woman in Lincolnshire thought it a small thing to teach a dull boy his figures, but that boy was Isaac Newton, who opened to us the world of the stars. The men who taught Shakespeare to write, and Michael Angelo to draw, and gave Mozart his first music lesson, did a small thing; they are dead and forgotten, but the great fruits of their teaching remain. The mothers who prayed for Augustine, and taught Gordon his Catechism, seemed to do a small thing, yet they gave saints to God's Church. Whoever works for Christ, however humbly, does great things. The mother's prayer travels faster than the telegraph, the good man's example is the strongest thing in the world. The man who moulds the Church bell in the foundry works in the dark and out of sight, but his work will one day ring out far and wide from the lofty tower. The man who does his duty makes his influence felt to the ends of the earth.

Daily Strength.

(A visitor once went to hear the famous chimes in a certain Cathedral abroad. When he entered the belfry he found a man with wooden gloves striking the keys of the chimes. There was a deafening noise, but no music ; the performer and the visitor could hear nothing but the clash of wood. But far away in the fields and streets people heard the sweet voices of the chimes. Most of our work is like that of the man with the wooden gloves ; we seem to make no music, we exert no influence. We toil away amid the noise and clatter of everyday work ; we teach in the school, or preach in the pulpit, or hammer on the bench, and it seems only noise, and not music. Ah, if it is rightly done, it is music, God hears it. Souls are comforted and made better by our work. Doing our duty is like playing the chimes, it seems hard and harsh, but it sends out music to cheer and encourage others in the right way.)

Sermon XVIII.

DAILY PROGRESS.

JOSHUA I. 6.

“Be strong, and of a good courage.”



THE Book of Joshua is like a bit of the Gospel in the middle of the Old Testament. The story of Joshua leading Israel into the Promised Land is a picture of Jesus (the same name as Joshua) leading His Church into the good land of Paradise. Israel is led out of Egypt by Moses, passes through the Red Sea, and spends some time in the wilderness, learning lessons, making mistakes, sometimes wandering out of the way. We are born into the Egypt of a sinful world, the slaves of sin, conceived and born into sin; we pass through the Red Sea of Christ's Blood in Holy Baptism, and start on our journey rejoicing as free men. The sin of Adam lies dead and buried behind, the command comes to go forward, daily pro-

Daily Progress.

ceeding in all virtue and godliness of living. The wilderness is the time of our childhood, our school time, where we have many hard lessons, when we often wander, and make mistakes, but the command is still to go forward.

Israel was always being told to advance, to go onwards to the Promised Land. There was no time for idling or waiting, all was progress forwards. So it is with us ; Jesus, our leader, is always saying—Friend, go up higher, follow Me, fight the good fight, run with patience the race set before you, press towards the mark, reach forward to those things that are before. There is no standing still for the Christian, he must grow in grace. There was no going back for Israel when the Red Sea was passed, the waters returned to stop the way ; when Jordan was crossed the waters came back to cut off retreat. There is no going back for us. When once the waters of Baptism are passed, there is no turning back, for that means death. Forward is the motto of the Christian, to go back is to perish. The man who puts his hand to the plough and looks back is not fit for the Kingdom of Heaven. The soldier in Christ's army who retreats is a traitor ; if we turn back to Egypt we lose the good Land of Promise.

Well, like Israel in the wilderness, we are in our childhood. Then comes the time of our Confirma-

Daily Progress. 50

tion, when we go forth to work and to fight and to labour in the world. We are no longer babes in Christ, we have put on the whole armour of God ; we have said—As for me, I will serve the Lord, I am going into the Promised Land. Then we come to Jordan. Israel determined to go into the Promised Land, but Jordan stopped the way ; Jordan, swollen by spring floods and melting snows, was a roaring torrent. How could Israel cross that awful flood ? No doubt their enemies watched from the other side, and jeered at them, saying—They can never cross Jordan, or enter the Promised Land. Then what did Israel do ? Exactly what God told them to do. The Priests, bearing the Ark of the Covenant, entered the river, and Israel followed where they led, and a way was made for them. All Israel had to do was to trust God and obey.

So it is with us. As soon as we are ready to lead the life of God's soldiers we come to Jordan, a great river of difficulty and temptation lies before us. The young man going to his first situation out in the world says—I am going to the Promised Land, I am going to keep my body pure and holy, I am going to pray, and kneel at the Altar, and read my Bible, as I have always done. Then he comes to Jordan, the deep river of temptation and difficulty. His enemies sneer at him, and say—Do you think

you are going to lead a religious life here? No one prays here, or believes in the Bible, that is only for babies, not for men and women. How is he to get through the river, the flood is too strong for him? Then God says—Only be strong and very courageous, fear not, for I am with Thee, go where the Church leads. Israel followed the Priests bearing the Ark, and they passed safely over Jordan. If we follow the teachings of the Church, if we go where God's Priests lead the way, we shall pass over the Jordan of temptation and doubt and difficulty. God will make a way for us through the deep Jordan of trial.

A young man leaves home, and goes to business, or work of some kind. Bad companions entice him, a bad example is before him, he has to meet with ridicule and persecution because he tries to lead a godly life. Then he says—I shall never get over this Jordan, it is too deep, too strong for me. Remember, if you do not get over that Jordan you will never enter the Promised Land. Be strong, and of a good courage, Jesus will carry you through all temptations. Who or what in the world is stronger than God? When the river is deepest and strongest, there is the Ark going on before, making a way for us. Remember God's Promise, "There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all

Daily Progress. 50

the days of thy life." I daresay Israel was tempted to think—I shall never be able to cross the flood and get to my journey's end; we are often tempted in the same way. In travelling by train I have seen a passenger troubled and excited because he thinks he has lost his ticket. He feels in his pockets; he cries—I shall never be able to reach my journey's end. Suddenly he finds his ticket, he has been feeling in the wrong pocket. We are sometimes tempted to say—I shall never reach my journey's end; we have lost our faith and trust in God, we feel in the wrong pocket, the pocket of unbelief, but we do not find it there. We feel in the pocket of self-righteousness, or carelessness, but we shall not find it there. Then we feel in the right pocket, and our faith is found again, and we go on our way rejoicing.

[Israel passed over Jordan, but there were more dangers in front; they escaped from one difficulty only to meet another. There stood Jericho, a strong city, walled up to Heaven. But the command was still—Go forward, Jericho must be taken.] So with ourselves, we pass through one trial or temptation only to meet with another. We cross Jordan, and there stands Jericho, the way to the Promised Land is blocked by difficulties. Still the command is to go forward, to be strong, and very courageous.

[Israel was not to take Jericho by its own strength, or to lift sword or spear against it. Jericho was to be taken in God's way. The Priests were to carry the Ark round Jericho for seven days, bearing with them trumpets of ram's horns. On the seventh day, when they blew a blast, the walls would fall down. Israel wondered, but obeyed. Doubtless the men of Jericho laughed behind their strong walls, and thought that a few Priests bearing trumpets could not hurt them. For six days the Ark was carried round Jericho, but the walls stood as strong as ever.] It was God's Church fighting against sin and unbelief, and God's Church always wins in the end. [On the seventh day, whilst the people laughed, the Priests went seven times round Jericho, and the trumpets sounded, and the people shouted, and the walls of Jericho fell down flat.] God always keeps His promises. He says that the gates of hell shall not prevail against His Church, and He always keeps His promises.

Now let us think for ourselves. We all have a Jericho, a strong city of temptation to conquer, and we cannot conquer it by ourselves. What overthrew the walls of Jericho? The Priests blowing the trumpets. What overthrows our difficulties? The Church, with the trumpet of prayer, no man can stand against that. Men sneer at the Priest saying

Daily Progress. ~~so~~

the daily prayers of the Church, and ask, of what use is it? He is praying that the walls of sin may fall down. A mother prays for her wild son out at sea, and people say—Of what use is it? It is a trumpet to overthrow the walls of evil. You cannot conquer sin by your own strength. All the civilization, and education, and cheap literature, and charitable institutions will not make men and women good. If we would conquer sin, if we would throw down the walls of wicked Jericho, we must take the trumpet of prayer. We must trust God, and obey God, we must follow the Ark, we must follow the teaching of Holy Church, blowing lustily on our trumpet, praying without ceasing. God always gives the victory to the praying man. When the Athenians were at war with the Lacedomians, they were defeated over and over again. Then they enquired of their oracle why they, who gave such costly gifts to the temples of their gods, were conquered, whilst the Lacedomians, a poor people, who only gave their prayers, were victorious? And their god answered—I am better pleased with the prayers of Lacedemon than with all the gifts of Athens.

Keep on praying, and be patient. The walls of Jericho did not fall at once, day after day there was no change, and the Priests might have grown weary, and have said—What is the use? So with

Daily Progress.

our prayers, no answer may come, the wall of doubt, or temptation, or trouble stands firm as ever; the difficulty is not removed, the burden still lies upon us. Do not lose faith, follow the Ark, go where the Church leads, trust to God, and keep on praying, remembering Who leads you. It is Jesus, our Joshua, Who stretched out His Hands upon the Cross to gain the victory for us. No enemy can stand against that Joshua. Hold fast the trumpet of prayer, and a day will come, our last day here, when our last battle has been fought, our last temptation overcome, the last wall thrown down, and our dying breath is a shout of triumph, "Thanks be to God, Who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Sermon XIX.

LIVING VOICES.

HEBREWS XI. 4.

“He being dead, yet speaketh.”



SCIENCE tells us that sound never dies, no word, no strain of music is lost, but goes on echoing through space as the thunder rolls from one side of the sky to another. You know that if you strike the string of a musical instrument the sound continues to vibrate long afterwards. Well, sound is always vibrating. It is a wonderful thought that the song which the angels sang together at the creation is still echoing through unknown realms of space; and that the song of the angels on the first Christmas morn, “Peace on earth, good will to men,” is ringing somewhere now. None of the anthems of praise sang in grand Cathedral or simple village Church are lost to the Ear of God, they still echo through the Courts of Heaven. It

of Living Voices.

is a glorious thought that none of our poor words of praise are lost; that the first hymn which we sang as little children, and the last song of the dying patriarch, "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace," are safe in God's hearing, as all our tears are safe in His bottle, and all our prayers safe in His Heart.

Have you ever seen that wonderful instrument the gramophone? A man sings into it, and long years after, you can hear his voice and song. A man speaks words into it, wise or foolish, and after he is dead and buried men can hear the words just as he spoke them. This shows that our voices, our words, do not die. People die, and go hence, and we cannot see them, or clasp their hands, but we can hear their voices. Memory is the greatest of all gramophones. Who has not said—I can remember what my old friend used to say; I often think of my mother's words? What mother forgets what her little child said with its lisping tongue? "He, being dead, yet speaketh." They call the grave the land of silence, but it is full of echoes; and there come voices from beyond the grave, from the farther shore; they, being dead, yet speak.

There are *the voices of the old home*. Years and years have passed perhaps since we saw it, strangers look out of the windows, and other voices speak

Living Voices. 90

in the rooms. But for us there are the old voices. We know each room ; the old bedroom where we slept the innocent sleep of childhood, where the flowers tapped at the window in the morning to waken us. We remember the old pictures on the walls, the Prodigal Son coming home, perhaps Joseph and his brethren. And can we remember no voices? Yes, it is our mother's voice, teaching us to say, "Gentle Jesus," and "Now I lay me down to sleep"; the voice of the little sister who died, and left a great blank in our small life; we remember them all. There is the old garden where we wandered, and the old tree where we cut our name—was it forty or fifty years ago? We have seen many gardens since then, but none so sweet; few have gathered no flowers as fair as those of old. There is the cave where we hid in our play with our little brothers and sisters, all gone now, yet we can hear their voices calling just as of old. It may be that the old home is destroyed, the walls pulled down, the rooms vanished, but the voices are there for those who have ears to hear.

"The work which they left, and the books which they read,
Speak mutely, yet still with an eloquence rare;
And the songs which they sang, and the dear words they said,
Yet linger a sigh in this desolate air."

Then *there are the voices of the old Church.* Some

❧ Living Voices.

of us, perhaps, did not heed them. Out in the Australian bush to-day, or in the Canadian backwoods, or on the African veldt, many an exile hears in memory the voices of the old bells, the voices of singers long silent in death, the voice of the preacher who lies asleep beneath the Church window. They will never see the old grey Church again, but they hear the voices. Brethren, do the voices of the Church never come back to you? There was a day, your Confirmation day, when you knelt with friends and neighbours in Church, and heard very solemn words, a very solemn question: "Do ye here, in the presence of God and of this congregation, renew the solemn promise and vow that was made in your name at your Baptism?" And the solemn prayer: "Defend, O Lord, this Thy child, with Thy heavenly grace, that he may continue Thine for ever." And then you answered—I do. I do renew the vows of chastity, and purity, and faith, and obedience. I do mean to be Christ's faithful soldier and servant, I do mean to fight the good fight, and to take the whole armour of God. Do you remember these voices, and the deep *Amen* which came from your parents' hearts? And what now? Is there no reproach in these voices, no voice which says—Son, daughter, remember? How have you kept your vows, where is your answer now, where is the white robe

Living Voices. 56

of purity, of innocency, where are your prayers? Have you fought the good fight, or have you gone over to the enemy, and allowed your own hearts' lusts to bind and chain you? Ah, brethren, it is heart-breaking work for some of us to look back into the past.

Then there are other voices from the old Church, the voice of our first Communion. The early morning light is streaming on the Altar, and you have come for the first time to receive the Bread of Life. She who kneels beside you whispers—Thank God for this. You seem to-day to hear a voice saying, "Take, eat, this is My Body"; "This is My Blood, which was shed for you and for many for the remission of sins; do this in remembrance of Me." Ah, for some of us, what a great gulf there is between then and now. We have almost forgotten those words, it is so long since we heard them, and the voices of the world, and the flesh, and the devil, the voices of greed and selfishness are so loud in our ears that we cannot hear the pleading Saviour.

Then *there are the voices of the Churchyard*. It is a very quiet, silent spot, yet it is full of voices. All sorts and conditions of men lie there, and all being dead, yet speak. There is the grave of one who was flattered and praised, who was ambitious, and wished to climb high, who was proud of his

wealth and power ; he, being dead, yet speaketh—I charge thee throw away ambition ; I lived for the world, for the honour and praise of men ; I wanted to lay field to field, and heap up riches. What have I now ? Six feet of earth to lie in. What am I now ? A little dust. Here is a young girl's grave, and there are voices there—I was young and thoughtless as you are, I was vain of my beauty, careless of the future, and in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, death came to me ; you are not too young to die. Here is the grave of one who lived without God in the world, who never entered the Church, except when he was carried there, who never comforted the afflicted, or fed the orphans, or helped the poor. A voice speaks there—What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul. There is one grave by which we linger long, a mother's grave. Perhaps we grieved her loving heart with our selfishness and disobedience ; perhaps, God help us, we brought her grey hairs with sorrow to the grave, but she, being dead, yet speaketh the same loving, gentle words of forgiveness and sweet counsel, for no grave can shut out a mother's love. Oh, thank God for a good mother ; she taught you to pray, she is praying for you now ; we should be worse off than we are if there was no mother interceding for us in Paradise. The

Living Voices. 20

hero Garibaldi was perfectly fearless in battle or in storm, and said that he knew his mother was praying for him before God's throne, and so he was safe.

A man who became well known for his holy life, was, as a child, wild and wicked. He even desired to be an infidel, but the sight of his good mother checked him. His father was a drunken and brutal man, and the mother would take her two boys to a lonely spot on the hill-side and pray with them. The cruelty of the husband sent her to an early grave, and one son grew up hardened and vicious. After many years he came near to his old home, and went to the lonely spot on the hill-side. It seemed just the same, as though no feet had trodden it since, and he seemed to hear his dead mother's voice pleading as of old. All the past came back to him, his impenitence, his hardness of heart, his rejection of Christ, till he sank on his knees in an agony of prayer. It was the turning point in his life; his mother, being dead, yet spoke to him.

Then *there are the voices of the old books*. No one need be lonely who has books to read, a library is full of voices. The men who wrote the books have been dead for perhaps hundreds of years, but they, being dead, yet speak, and their voices are those of love, of beauty, of cheer, of warning. I

— Living Voices.

may hear no other voices, but my books talk to me. I can stand beneath the arches of ancient Greece or Rome, and hear the voices of philosopher, and poet, and minstrel. I can hear the voice of Cæsar, and the musical voice of Virgil. Blind Homer, dead for ages, speaks to me, and I can hear the clang of the battle as the long-haired Greeks sweep up against the walls of Troy. I can open the pages of Shakespeare, and hear the voices of "the spacious times of great Elizabeth," the times of Raleigh, and Richard Grenville, and the Armada. I can open the volumes of Milton, and the blind poet speaks to me, and tells me of

"Man's disobedience, and the fruit of that forbidden tree whose
mortal taste
Brought death into the world, and all our woe."

But, above all books, the Bible is full of voices. Patriarch, and Priest, and Prophet, saintly maiden, godly matron—all these, being dead, yet speak. We can hear the dying song of Simeon, and the jubilant hymn of the Blessed Virgin, and the mournful plaint of Job, and the agonized cry of Judas. But among the voices there is one which is sweetest and dearest, the Voice of One Who died, and is alive again, the Voice of the Good Shepherd, calling His lost sheep home, telling us how He died for us, and ever liveth to intercede for us.

Living Voices.


Then *there is the voice of conscience.* That is God's own voice speaking in us, the Kingdom of God within us, and some of us will not listen. We stop our ears with the world's cares and sins, and we will not hear. The old Roman, writing of those who went burning and destroying a country, said—They make a desert, and call it peace. So people drive away conscience, stifle the still small voice, make their life a spiritual desert, and say they are at peace. Yet we must hear the voice sometimes. Perhaps when we are lying awake upon our bed we see the handwriting on the wall, we hear a voice saying, "Thou art the man." It may be a strain of music, the words of an old song, a half-forgotten hymn, which brings back the past, and says—Remember what you were, and what you are, and what you will be. We may shut our ears, but the voice will be heard. There was a murderer lately who lived for four years close to the grave of a murdered woman. All through his trial, and afterwards, he denied his guilt, and he was led out to die, still denying it. On the very scaffold the chaplain whispered—Guilty, or not guilty? And at the last moment the answer came—Guilty. He had heard the voice. Brethren, God speaks to us with many voices. "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth."

Sermon XX.

IN THE MORNING.

EXODUS xxxiv. 2.

"In the morning."

HE morning and the evening made up the first day, they have made up every day since. Morning calls us unto our work and our labour until the evening, then comes rest. So is our life. There is the morning of childhood and youth, the evening of old age and decay; the morning of blossom and promise, the evening of fruit and fulfilment; the morning of sunrise, a sign of new life; the evening sunsetting, a sign of death; morning glory, and evening shadow, and both very beautiful.

There are many mornings of which we read in the Bible. God says to Moses, "Be ready in the morning, and come up in the morning to Mount Sinai, and present there thyself to Me." This is a command for us all, our first duty in the morning

In the Morning. 50

is to be ready to meet God. He gives us a new day, a new lease of life, another day's work and duty, and we must be ready. In manufacturing towns the day comes in with bells and steam whistles, giving the signal to be ready, telling men that it is time to rise and work. Every worker knows that he will lose his place and wages if he is not ready. But there is a more important duty still, each morning we must be ready for God's work, for another day's labour in God's vineyard. God says—Be ye ready ; those who were ready went into the marriage.

Brethren, you are mostly ready for your work in the morning, ready for the duties of the farm, or the shop, or the labour by which you live, but are you ready for God? "Be ready in the morning, and come up in the morning to Mount Sinai, and present thyself there unto Me." That is our first duty in the morning. Take high ground in the morning, do not begin by digging in the world's pit ; go up to Mount Sinai, the holy place, the place of prayer, turn your thoughts first of all to God, speak to Him in prayer, present yourselves unto Him in the morning.

Think of another Bible morning. "When the cloud was taken up in the morning, then they journeyed." The cloud meant to Israel God's presence, they knew that He was with them, though they could

In the Morning.

not see Him, for no man hath seen God at any time. The people knew that God was in the midst of them, hidden in a cloud by day, and in the fiery column by night. God led them in the day time by a cloud, and all the night through with the light of fire. The people went where God led them, not in their own way, but in His way. They put all in His Hands, every stage of the journey, every working place, every halting place, was mapped out for them. "At the commandment of the Lord they rested, and at the commandment of the Lord they journeyed."

Surely this is a model for us. God is in the midst of us ; Jesus, the Word of God, was made flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth, and we beheld His glory. Yet we cannot now see Jesus, He is hidden in the cloud, He is wrapped in the veil of the Sacraments, yet He is here, leading, directing, guiding us. What God's presence in the cloud was to Israel, the presence of Jesus in the Sacraments is to us. Every morning the first thing Israel looked on was the cloud, God's guiding presence. So we should look for God first of all every morning, and say—Guide me, O Thou great Redeemer, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest. Then we shall feel that all is well with us, no danger, no evil can hurt us, because we are following Jesus in the way. It may be a hard way, rough, and full of difficulties,

In the Morning. 20

as it was for Israel through the wilderness, but Israel went on, saying—There is the cloud in front, God is leading us. So we should feel, when the path of life is hard and difficult. The Lord it is Who goeth before us, if we keep Him in sight all will be well.

“ I do not ask to see
The distant scene ; one step enough for me.”

Brethren, when you wake in the morning look first for the cloudy pillar, for the veiled Saviour, and take your journey as God leads. Israel knew not whither they were going each day, they were strangers and pilgrims, ignorant of the dangers and temptations of the way, but they saw the cloud, and knew that God was guiding them. We wake in the morning, and know not what the day will bring forth, or what we shall be called upon to do or suffer ; we know not what terrible blow, what awful temptation, what crushing sorrow may await us. But we can look to God, we can feel that the Lord is our helper and defender, that He will make our way clear to us, and give us strength to bear our burden. Oh, let us put ourselves in God's Hands in the morning.

Take another Bible morning. “ In the morning sow thy seed.” No farmer would sow his seed at night ; he would not be able to see what he sowed,

☞ In the Morning.

or where the seed fell. Never put off any duty to the evening of life. Morning is the time for work and action. The child is taught when young, the seed is sown in the morning, that the harvest of success may be reaped in the evening of life. The soldier is drilled in the morning, that he may become a veteran to command with honour. So with the duties of religion, begin in the morning of life, give your hearts to God whilst they are fresh and pure in the morning ; those that seek God early shall find Him. He does not want us to come to Him as cripples, worn out with old age, bringing our selfish lives, lived only in the world's service ; God does not want the refuse of our lives, but the best of them. He loves the heart which is as the heart of a little child, not one grown hard in worldliness. We see people who have lived for long years without God or religion, when they are old, and cannot serve the world any more, turning to their Bible, and thinking that they are serving God. God does not want the fag-end of our life, He wants all our life, from the morning of childhood to the evening of old age.

“In the morning sow thy seed,” or the night will come when there shall be no harvest but sorrow and remorse. We began our life with God in Holy Baptism, the morning of our life was wet with

In the Morning. &c

Baptismal dew, in the morning good seed was sown in our hearts. Let every morning be a Baptism, a sowing ; let every morning see a death unto sin, and a rising again unto righteousness. Let every morning see us pass through the cleansing of repentance. Let every morning be a time of sowing the good seed of holiness. Cast thy bread, thy prayers, upon the waters ; ask God to sow the seed of eternal life in your hearts in the morning. To-day is yours, the morning is yours, do not neglect it, or you will be obliged to say—I did not seek God in the morning of life, and now, in the dark evening of age, I cannot find Him. I only sowed to the world, and the flesh, and now my flesh faileth me, and the fashion of the world passeth away. What have I reaped, a handful of bitterness, a bundle of disappointment.

“ In the morning sow thy seed.” What seed ? The seed of a good character, a good example. Think in the morning that you are God’s child, God’s servant, that you have to live to-day as His child. Some people seem to think nothing of the importance of a good character. They say of some bad man that he is a clever man of business, a shrewd practitioner ; but a man may be clever in business and yet lose his soul. God does not care whether we are clever or dull, but He does care whether we

In the Morning.

are honest, upright, truthful, pure, that is what really matters. All our cleverness and business capacity will not pass us through the narrow gate of eternal life.

"Be good, and let who will be clever."

Think to yourself, I am God's servant; I must live up to it every morning.

Take another Bible morning. "In the morning they were all dead corpses." You remember how the army of Assyria was encamped against Israel, and King Hezekiah and the people were full of fear, there was no hope, no escape. Then Hezekiah did the only wise thing to do, he prayed to God. The people went to bed at night in terror, and God sent a deadly pestilence into the camp, and in the morning the enemy were all dead corpses. The night of terror was followed by the morning of deliverance and joy. Sometimes we go to bed full of fears and doubts and anxieties, a great army of troubles and worries and sorrows is encamped against us. We fret and vex ourselves; we say—What shall we do? I will tell you, pray about it. Spread your trouble before the Lord. Fretting will not help you, crying will not help you, prayer will. In the morning you will see things in a new light, the troubles which seemed so great will appear as trifles, what we feared at night we can face in the

In the Morning. 50

morning. There was a great army of worries encamped against us, after prayer, in the morning, they are all dead. The mountains of difficulty have been rolled away like mists in the valley, all the giants of trouble and perplexity have fallen, in the morning they are all dead corpses.


Take one more Bible morning. "For now shall I sleep in the dust; thou shalt seek me in the morning, but I shall not be." That is true of us all. The day comes when they say, "One morn we missed him from the accustomed spot." They do not see him in the streets or lanes; they "shall no more see him in the long grey fields at night." His house is silent and shut up, the blinds are down at the windows. Yes, the morning must come when people cannot see us any more, or hear our voice. But we shall have another and a better morning, we shall have passed from the heart-ache and the pain, the worries and labours, the sins and failures of this world. We shall have forgotten all about aching hearts and aching limbs, and have come to the brightest of all mornings, to the presence of Jesus, and an innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect, all our old friends who went before us. "Sorrow may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."

Sermon XXI.

BEATITUDES.

S. MATTHEW V. 3.

"Blessed."

UR Lord repeats this word blessed nine times in the most wonderful sermon that was ever preached. *Blessed*, that means happy. Jesus told the people, as He tells us, how to be happy. It is what everyone wants to know, people have been trying to find out the secret since the world began. At one time people spent their life in seeking wealth as a means of happiness, they tried to discover the secret of turning everything into gold. They never found either the gold or the happiness. Others spent their lives in seeking a medicine which would make them immortal. Just when they thought they had discovered it they died, and died unhappy.

People seek happiness in the wrong way now.

Beatitudes. 50

They try to turn everything into gold, they think that when they have so much in the bank they will be happy ; but it is not so, they want more. They think when they have got a certain piece of land they will be happy ; but they always want yet another piece. They think when they have reached a certain point of distinction it will mean happiness ; but they always find that they want to go up higher. Some people seek happiness in long life, they do not want to die, they are always seeking new remedies ; they think if they can only find the right one they will be happy, and so they die unsatisfied, because they are all seeking happiness in the wrong place. We can only find happiness in one way, Christ's way, the Gospel's way, the Church's way. Jesus mentions nine classes of happy people, no others, and notice that this blessedness and this happiness is spiritual. It has nothing to do with worldly pleasures, or position, or rank, it is soul happiness, heart happiness.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven." Jesus puts poorness of spirit first, so must we, because it is the keynote of happiness, the foundation of true religion. To be Christ's, to be happy, we must be poor in spirit. What does that mean? We call someone poor-spirited, meaning that he is a coward, a mean, con-

of Beatitudes.

temptible creature, but it does not mean that. Neither does it mean to be poor in pocket, neither riches or poverty have anything to do with it. Many poor people are very rich in godliness, as having nothing, yet possessing all things. Dives may be miserable in purple and fine linen, and Lazarus may be happy in rags. The poor in spirit mean the humble, the lowly in heart, who feel that without God they can do nothing, who do not seek to be high up, but are content to serve God in a low place if they are put there. These are they who do not sing their own praises, but God's, who do not boast that they are better than their neighbour, but cry ever, "Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner." These have the priceless blessing of contentment; they may be poor in the world's eyes, but they have a kingdom, the Kingdom of Heaven within them, they carry in their hearts the peace of God which passeth all understanding.

"*Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.*" It is no wonder that worldly people sneer at the Sermon on the Mount, it is so utterly opposed to the way of the world. The world says—Happy are the successful, the men at the top, the ambitious, the rising. The world laughs at the happiness of mourning, it asks how can we be happy in sorrow? Again, this does not mean worldly sor-

Beatitudes. 50

row, not sorrow for lost money, or lost health, or wishes, but spiritual sorrow. It means sorrow for sin. Happy are they who see their sins, and mourn for them, not the silly people who go simpering through life, and think that all is well with them ; happy are they who mourn because they have broken God's laws, and wounded the Lord Jesus over again, who sorrow after a godly sort, like S. Peter, and many another true penitent. Happy is the man who can mourn over his own sins and those of the world, for he shall find comfort, and hear the absolving word, "Thy sins be forgiven thee."

"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." Again Christ and the world are on opposite sides. The world sneers at the meek, it says that such an one has no courage, no spirit, and lets men trample upon him. But that is not meekness ; some of the meekest saints had a naturally fiery temper, like Moses, and S. Paul, and S. Peter, but they kept under their temper, they kept their mouths, as it were, with a bridle. It shows how far men have drifted from Christ, and the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount, when we find them ridiculing meek, patient souls, and praising the pushing, the proud, and the impudent. Jesus does not say—Blessed are the successful, the loud, the boastful, the pushing, the men at the top, but "Blessed are the meek." The

world has always a blessing for success, it bows down before the man in prosperity, it crowns the man who is highest. Jesus looks at the bottom of the ladder, at the lowest room; He lifts up the fallen, and exalts the humble and meek; Jesus was meek and lowly, and He has a blessing for all such. Who, then, are the meek? Those who are meek towards God, who bow to His will, who take what He sends thankfully and patiently, whose rule of life is, "Thy will be done." The meek are those who are meek towards their fellow-men, and take injuries patiently. A negro boy was asked by a missionary—Who are the meek? And he answered—Those who return soft answers to rough questions. Blessed is the household where meek spirits dwell, bearing with cross tempers and rough manners, and cruel words. The Vestal Virgins in old Rome always kept alive the sacred fire on the altar of Vesta. Every meek Christian keeps alive the fire of holiness on the altar of the true God. "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth"; yet they are often very poor and lowly, as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.

The Apostle says—All things are yours. The meek follower of Jesus has all the world to enjoy and thank God for. Every sunrise, every flower, every lovely view, is God's gift to him. He may

Beatitudes. 50

not own one yard of land, yet he can tread the grass fields, and see the blossoms in the hedges, and hear the birds in the trees, as well as the king. He does not envy the rich man the trees in his park, but thanks God for their shade. He thanks God for the fresh air, the sunshine, the stars, the beautiful world in which he lives, so he inherits the earth.

"Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." The nature of man is to crave for, to hunger after, something. "Man never is, but always to be, blest," except those of the text. Righteousness is the one thing which satisfies. All worldly things fail us, the world's cup has no bottom. There is ambition, the higher it goes the more it wants to climb. There is wealth, but it is never quite enough. Only God can satisfy a hungry soul. No one was ever quite satisfied with what the world gave. People sometimes complain of want of appetite, but there is a worse thing still, a want of spiritual appetite, when people have no taste for the good things of God. You take a man accustomed to coarse, common food, and set him down to a great feast of the most delicate dishes, but he does not understand or enjoy them ; he says—Give me the swine trough, I am at home there. Put before him God's feast, the beauties of religion, the services of the Church, the Blessed Food of the

Altar, and he will not come ; he would rather sit by the swine trough of sin than feast in his Father's House. Brethren, if we have no appetite for holy things now, we shall hunger like the Prodigal hereafter. If we never thirst, like David, for the living God here, we shall thirst, like Dives, in the next world.

"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." God is loving, and merciful, and of great kindness ; man, as a rule, is just the opposite. Yet we all need mercy more than anything else. We are always saying, "Have mercy upon us, miserable sinners." Yet what mercy do we show ; how do we speak of miserable sinners, especially those who injure us ? Men sit in judgment on their fellow-men, and always bring in a verdict of guilty. What can we say of ourselves, are we merciful in our judgments, in our words, our acts, our manner ? Are we careful not to hurt or wound the feelings of others, are we loving and gentle in dealing with them ? In a word, are we kindly affectioned one to another ; do we smooth life's path for the weary feet, or stick it full of stones ; do we brighten life with the sunshine of kindness, or darken it with the black storm of ill-temper ? Remember also that mercy means more than kindness to our fellow-men, we must be merciful to the animals, to all God's

Beatitudes. 90

creatures. S. Francis called all living creatures his brethren, and rightly. We are all one family, the same God Who made your dog made you. A Christian has no more right to be cruel to a dumb animal than to his brother man.

"He prayeth best who loveth best
All creatures great and small,
For the dear God Who loveth us,
He made and loveth all."

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Ah, happy, blessed indeed, are those whose hearts are pure, whose thoughts are clean, who are trustful and loving as the heart of a little child. The parents of Origen used to uncover his breast as he slept and kiss him over the heart, saying—There is the temple of the Holy Ghost.

The pure in heart see God here and hereafter. In the middle ages people tried to see the future in a magic crystal ball. To the eyes of average men and women there was nothing to be seen, but if a pure child looked into the glass he saw what none else could see. The pure in heart see what others cannot see, they see God, they walk with God in Paradise, like man before the Fall, they fear no peril by day, no terror by night, they see God's Hand and God's angels about their bed and about their path. In joys and sorrows, in riches

❧ Beatitudes.

and poverty, in health and sickness, they see God alike, and therefore hereafter they shall be without spot before the Throne of God.

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God." The peacemakers are most like God, Who is the Prince of Peace. Jesus Christ came to make peace; peace on earth was the message of Christmas. God's Family should be a household of peace, and peace should be upon her palaces, because the Lord maketh men to be of one mind in a house. God will have all men to love one another, and make peace, and yet the world is full of peace breakers. Every parish, every village, every lane and street has those who quarrel, and speak evil, and stir up strife. Look at a country village, there are pretty cottages smothered in roses, quiet cattle are feeding in the meadows, birds are singing in the hedges, how peaceful it all looks. But stop a moment and listen. Two neighbours are quarrelling, or abusing a third person. Out of the peaceful-looking cottage come furious words, angry cries. Men live next door to each other for years without speaking, because they have quarrelled about some trifle. Oh, the pity of it. Roses climb the cottage walls, and there are thorns and briars in the people's hearts; blessed are gentle souls who try to make peace.

Beatitudes. 50


"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake, blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My Name's sake, for great is your reward in Heaven." There are no crosses and gibbets and chains and fires for Christians now, yet there are persecutions. The earnest Communicant is jeered at by the godless neighbour, and called a hypocrite. The wicked have always got a stone ready for the faithful Christian, and these things are very hard to bear sometimes. To be the only one who prays in a crowded bedroom, and to be laughed at; to be the only honest person in a place of business, and to be ridiculed; to be the only Church-goer in a family, and to be mocked, all this is very hard to bear. Yet such are blessed, happy; they suffer now, they are out on the wide sea now, but God's good land is yonder, and there is a great reward waiting them in Heaven. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him."

Sermon XXII.

THE OTHER MARIES.

S. MATTHEW XXVIII. 1.

“In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre.”

E know that many holy women were present at the Crucifixion, though all the disciples, except S. John, had fled. Women are often braver than men to confess Christ and to suffer for righteousness' sake. We know also that some of the holy women brought precious spices to embalm the Body of their Lord, and we are told some of their names, Mary, the Blessed Virgin, Mary Magdalene, the wife of Cleophas, and mother of James and John; but one is spoken of as the *other Mary*, we are not told who or what she was. Yet she loved Jesus like the rest, she ministered to Him, and faced the dangerous crowd at Calvary, and

The Other Maries. 50

spent money on costly spices, yet she is only the *other Mary*. We do not know her story, God does.

In the famous cemetery of Père la Chaise, in Paris, there are many splendid monuments to heroes, statesmen, poets, painters, but there is one monument on which fresh wreaths of flowers always hang. It is the monument to the unknown dead, whose grave no man knoweth. Some of God's greatest servants lie in unknown graves, like Moses, many are living for Him to-day unknown lives. The world forgets them, but God remembers them. The world never writes their names, but God has all the forgotten saints, living or dead, written in the Lamb's Book of Life. The Church honours the memory of certain Saints on special days; S. Paul, and S. Peter, and S. Mary Magdalene, and S. Mary the Virgin have their days, but on one day the Church commemorates all the other Maries, and calls it All Saints' Day. How many have lived and died for Jesus unknown, uncared for; there was no wreath on their coffin, no stone on their grave; patient, gentle, loving, they lived neglected, and they died forgotten, but they are among the great company of the other Maries, unknown to men, well known to Jesus.

I think most of us, brethren, belong to the other Maries. The world knows nothing about us, we

—§ The Other Maries.

are very humble and insignificant, when we are dead we shall soon be forgotten. If, however, we have ministered to Christ by helping our fellow-men, we shall not be forgotten in Heaven, much will be forgiven us because we loved much, we shall be among the other Maries. There is the poor cottager, quite unknown outside her parish, who said her prayers daily, who read her Bible, who went to Church and knelt at the Altar of the Blessed Sacrament, who was always kind to her neighbours, and never spoke ill of anyone; her body was laid in the Churchyard, without a stone to mark it, and her grave is forgotten to-day, but her name is written with the finger of God, and her epitaph is, "Well done, good and faithful servant"—one of the other Maries.

There is one who taught in the Sunday School, and loved the little children, who nursed the sick, and comforted the sad; no one knows or cares about her name, but God calls her one of the other Maries. Learn, brethren, that however humble and obscure we are, we can be God's servants and minister to Jesus. What we do may seem very small, but if we do our best it will be accepted.

The Bible tells us of many nameless Saints who are the other Maries. There was the poor widow who gave two mites to the Temple offerings. No one knew who she was, except that she was poor

The Other Maries.

and needy, yet her praise is in the Gospel, and our Lord said she cast in more than they all. Yet she only gave two mites, two half-farthings, nothing compared with the gold and silver in the treasury, yet it was all she had, so she gave more than they all. The gift of love and self-sacrifice is better in God's sight than thousands of gold and silver. That widow was one of the other Maries. God's treasury is still open, and Jesus still stretches out His Hands to receive gifts for His sick and needy; He says, "Inasmuch as ye have done unto one of the least of these, ye have done it unto Me." He sees the bottom of our lives and the bottom of our purses, and He knows what we give, and how we give it. What most of us can give is only two mites. Our very soul and body are only two mites compared with God's infinite greatness. Our love, our help, our work, our prayers, are only two mites, but if they are given for love's sake they are accepted.

We think sometimes that we have nothing to give, nothing fit for Christ's acceptance, then remember the two mites. We are tempted to think that what we do is so small, and that there is no result, no fruit from our work. We cannot tell. A gentle, kindly woman daily visited a sick man in his lodgings, prayed with him, sang to him, and read God's Word. The man recovered, and went back to the

of The Other Maries.

world careless and untouched. The ministering woman felt sadly that she had failed. Then a girl, who was dying in the next room, sent for her. She had led a careless life, but through the thin wall and open window she had heard the loving prayers, and the Word of God, and her heart had been touched and turned to Jesus. The visitor had not failed ; she was one of the other Maries.

There was the woman in the Gospel who brought the alabaster box to Jesus, it is not known for certain who she was, she was one of the other Maries, and her sweet fragrance fills the Christian Church for ever. We are told that she had been a sinner ; who among us has not, in one way or another? But she sought out Jesus. Her past was terrible, she had been a sinner ; her present was blessed, she was forgiven. We may have fallen into many and great transgressions, but if we seek out Jesus, and bring the tears of our broken, contrite heart, and pour out the sweet perfume of penitence, it will be very precious in His sight ; if with penitent tears we bathe the feet of the Master, He will receive us, our soul shall be sweetened to all eternity ; we shall be one of the other Maries.

There were the women who brought little children to Christ, that He should touch them. We do not know their names, probably they were poor, humble

The Other Maries. 50

folk, but what a glorious work they did. You can do it also, you mothers, sisters, teachers, shall be among the other Maries. If you are cumbered with much serving, if you are busy with the care of a family, and if you are bringing the children up in right way, you are doing a work for Christ. I have heard of a hard working, weary woman who was grieved because she seemed unable to do any work for Christ. She had promised her dying mother to care for a child sister, and she had no time for anything else. She dreamed a dream, and thought she knelt sadly and empty-handed before the Lord, Who had ordered all His servants to bring a gift. The woman cried—

“No hands can bear
A gift that are so filled with care.”

Then the Master asked what was her care, and she answered—

“I only toil to feed a child.”

Then the Master said—

“Yes, but the child is Mine.”

Learn, then, to do some work for Jesus, for love's sake, not to be seen of men, or praised, or paid, or rewarded. Some people can only work if they are advertised, and their names published abroad. They

☞ The Other Maries.

must have a flourish of trumpets always blown before them. But those who make the most noise do the least work. Small painters sign their names on their pictures, some of the greatest masters do not. Some of the best work is the quietest. For instance, there is the dew and the rain, it drops into the rose and disappears, but it makes the rose more beautiful and sweet. The seed falls into the earth, and is seen no more, but it comes again in the flower and the fruit and the corn. It is not the noisy people who shout from the housetops who bring most souls to Christ, but the quiet people who pray unseen. You may not be a S. Paul, or a S. Peter, a great teacher or preacher, but you can be one of the other Maries. You cannot, perhaps, be a burning and a shining light to lighten up the world, but you can be a clear light in a dark corner of the parish.

Be content, then, to be one of the unknown, humble workers for Christ, one of the other Maries. Live your little life, and do your little work as to the Lord. Give your best to Jesus. The widow did not refuse to give because she had no gold or silver, she gave all that she had, the best that she had; go and do likewise. Be content to do small things for Christ, a very small thing may bring a very great blessing. A kind word spoken, a cool hand laid on a fevered brow, a bunch of

The Other Maries.

flowers brought to a sick room, a cheerful talk which calls forth a smile, all these are small things, but they are accepted if they are done for Christ's sake.

A man writes such a hymn as "Abide with Me," or "Rock of Ages," it is a small thing to do, but millions sing that hymn, and are cheered, raised, blessed by it. A woman takes a child on her knee and tells it about Jesus, about the sweet story of old. It is a small thing to do, but years after, when the child is an old man, lonely and sorrowful, he remembers the childish story, and turns to Jesus in prayer, and blesses the unknown woman. A man composes a song, like "Home, sweet Home." It is a small thing, but how many sad, lonely hearts it has cheered. Some of the best books and songs and pictures are anonymous, so are some of the loveliest lives. It is not the name that matters, but the work.

"She hath cast in more than they all. Let her alone, she hath done what she could." Who wants a better epitaph? I have read of a certain monk who painted the walls of his cell with angel faces and the thorn-crowned head of the Saviour; but his work was rough and unskilled, and men laughed at his pictures. One day, as the monk stood sad and disappointed before his work, the cell was flooded with light, and he saw a vision of the Lord, Who said, "Well done," and touched the rude pic-

— The Other Maries.

tures, which became radiant with heavenly beauty.

Brethren, bring your poor gifts to Jesus, He will accept them, His touch will make them beautiful. If you pray for others, though your prayers be poor little broken prayers; if you help others over the rough places in life's path; if you can make a sad life happier, a dark room brighter; if you can cheer a lonely invalid, or bring a laugh to a sad face, or soothe a frightened child, or make a home happy, I tell you that you are doing an angel's work. A sunbeam shines into a room and makes it brighter and happier, then passes away, and is gone; none of us have very long to stay here, let us be like sunbeams, to cheer the lives of others, before we go hence and are no more seen.

“Work for some good, be it ever so slowly;
Cherish some flower, be it ever so lowly;
Labour, all labour is noble and holy,
Let thy great deeds be thy prayers to thy God.”

Be content to do some good for Christ's sake, without notice or reward; learn to say—I seek no lofty place, no honoured name, I seek no praise of men; I would be one of the other Maries.

Sermon XXIII.

FAITHFUL WORKERS.

2 CHRONICLES XXXIV. 12.

“ And the men did the work faithfully.”



THESE men were repairing the Temple for King Josiah, and they did it faithfully. That is how the world, the Church, the nation is repaired. God does not say to His workmen—Be clever, do great things, make a noise in the world ; He says—Be faithful, faithful unto death. He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful in that which is much. Well done, good and faithful servant. God says that to the humble man with the one talent as well as to the clever man with the five talents. It is not the number of the talents or the greatness of the work that matters, but the faithfulness with which the work is done. The faithful man with only one talent is better than the unfaithful with ten.

✻ Faithful Workers.

Learn, then that a true life means being faithful, doing all we have to do in a religious spirit, doing our duty as well as ever we can. We are all God's servants in His great Household, the Church ; some of us are upper servants, others are lower servants ; some of our work is high up and splendid, some is mean and common, some work in high places, some in the basement, some in the sight of men, some in the darkness, unseen. But the same thing is required of all, faithfulness. Most of us are people with only one or two talents ; God has so many humble situations to fill that He wants plenty of humble folk. It matters not how lowly and mean our work may be ; one thing only matters, faithfulness.

Next, remember that we must be faithful because we are workers together with God. In some studios and workshops the master works with his pupils and servants, they watch how he labours, he watches them. Always remember that you are in God's workshop, He is with you, you are workers together with God. The servant dare not do bad work whilst the master is looking on ; dare we, when God is always looking on ?

What is meant by religion ? Some think it means going to Church, saying our prayers, reading our Bible, but these are only small parts of it. Religion

Faithful Workers. 50

means doing our duty to God and our neighbour, doing what God would have us do faithfully. God gives us all different talents, different work, position, opportunities; it takes many differently shaped stones to build a house, and many different people to do God's work. But God says the same thing to all, whether they are high up, like the roof-tree, or down low, like the foundation brick—Be faithful. God does not want us all at the top, a good foundation is as necessary as a roof, though it is not seen. What God wants is that each of us should stand where He puts him, and use the talent, the weapon which is given him, faithfully in God's service. God works, and He expects us to work, He will not make the corn grow unless we till the ground. Many people do no work, because they want to be somewhere else, or differently employed. They say—If I had that position, or those talents, or that intellect, I could do something; if I were someone else I could do a great work. Not so; if we do not perform the work which God gives us, we shall never do any.

Once, in a fierce battle, a soldier saw the leader cheering his men on to victory. He said—If I were in his place, with that keen sword, I could fight, but I can do nothing with this bent and broken blade. So he cast away his sword and left the battle-

✧ Faithful Workers.

field. Presently the leader lost his sword, and as the enemy pressed hard upon him, he saw the broken blade left upon the ground. He seized it, and cut a path through his enemies. Brethren, we can always win a victory with the sword which God gives us, if we only use it rightly. In a battle more work is done by the common rifle than by the big guns. So in the battle of life, the workshop of life, the common-place people, the rank and file, who are faithful, do most work. God does not care about His servants being clever, or powerful, or influential, as long as they do what He gives them to do faithfully. There must be no idlers in the Lord's vineyard, no shirkers in His workshop, no deserters from His army, no sluggards in His harvest.

"The men did the work, faithfully." They were building up the Temple of God, we are doing the same, building up our life, which is meant to be holy, God's sanctuary; we are workers together with God, and always in our work and labour we should hear the Master saying, "Lo, I am with you always." One secret of faithful work is to be cheerful about it. Besides those men who repaired the Temple, there were Levites, who were skilled in music, and they cheered the hearts of the workers. The ancients say that when the walls of Thebes were being built, Amphion, by the magic of his music, drew the stones

Faithful Workers. 50

together; and others tell us that the bearers of a burden sing because in the pleasure of the music they feel the weight less. Happy are they who sing over their work, and do it faithfully.

Next, we must be faithful in our work because it is for our fellow-men. No man in this place, or anywhere else, lives only to himself, we influence others for good or evil. If two men work together, and one sees the other idle and careless, he will soon follow his example. One drunkard, one Sabbath-breaker, one swearer, makes many more. You may think what you do and say does not affect anyone, but it does, although you may not know it. We cannot live only for ourselves, the parents' example affects the children, the brother and sister influence each other; we are all leading someone to God or to ruin.

Brethren, strive to do your life's work well because of the others. The influence of what we do does not stop short with this life, the good lives after us, so does the evil. The worker dies, but the work lives. Who knows who sowed the acorns in the park or woodland, yet there are the oaks? Long after the hand of the planter is dust the oak tree stands and gives shelter to the weary, and beauty to the scene. The men who built Westminster Abbey or S. Paul's Cathedral are dead, but the work lives

✿ Faithful Workers.

as a glorious temple of the living God. Always remember to do your work faithfully, because you are working for the future. Shakespeare, Milton, Bunyan did not write books for an hour's amusement, they wrote for the future, for all time. The great builders did not build for a few years, but for all time. The influence of good work of any kind never ends. We are the better to-day for the books written ages ago. We are the better to-day for looking at the pictures painted when the world was younger. We owe our health, our comforts, or progress to-day to the discovery of former times. A man discovers steam, and dies, but we live, and profit by it. A man discovers chloroform, and dies, but thousands live and are kept from suffering. A man preaches faithfully, and dies, and is silent, but his words live and guide others to Heaven. We leave a mark behind us for good or evil. Someone dies, and we say that his work is finished, but it is not so. The result of the work goes on. You had, perhaps, a good mother, who taught you wisely and lovingly, her body is in the Churchyard, but is her work, her influence, finished? That green grave is a magnet to draw your memory to her, you carry her face on your heart, her teaching in your recollection, and you are better men and women in consequence. You say, I must do my work faithfully

Faithful Workers.

for my mother's sake. Oh, they come back to us, those pure and holy ones, though no other eye than ours can see them. They speak to us, and bid us be pure and brave, honest and faithful.

“Uttered not, yet comprehended,
Is the spirit's voiceless prayer,
Soft rebukes in blessings ended,
Breathing from the lips of air.
Oh, though oft depressed and lonely,
All my fears are laid aside,
If I but remember only
Such as them have lived and died.”

The influence of a good life and a good work never dies. They speak here to-day of men long dead ; they say of such an one, he was a good father, a good neighbour ; they point to a building, and say it is such an one's work. They tell you that he knew how to build, and they point at the work to prove it ; they show you a sweet flower garden, and tell of him who first tilled and cultivated it. Brethren, all through our lives we are building for eternity, our works will live after our bodies are dust. We are always laying out gardens for the future, sweet flower gardens of holiness, or the weedy, thorny patch of the sluggard. We are all painting pictures, carving names, writing life stories, to be a blessing or a curse after we have gone hence.

✠ Faithful Workers.

“The men did the work faithfully.” Let us be faithful in the little things of life. All life is made up of little things, there are few great events or works in our experience. We mostly live and die within a narrow circle, our part is to do what we have to do faithfully. Are you a minister of state? Remember you are God’s minister, and must be faithful. Are you a carpenter? Remember you are God’s carpenter, and must be honest and true, and do good work, and use good material. Are you a striker in a forge? Remember you are God’s servant, and must strike hard and true, as in God’s service. Are you a shopkeeper? Remember you are God’s shopkeeper, let Him keep the accounts, be honest to the uttermost farthing, be just and true in all your dealings, let your counter be clean from all trickery and deceit. It is the little things of life which are so important. There is the signalman on the railway, he only has to move a lever, yet thousands of lives depend upon him. There is the steersman of the ship, he holds no lofty position, yet one wrong turn of the wheel will put the ship on the rocks. The man who builds a lighthouse does a great work, but what of the humble men who keep the lamps burning? Brethren, be faithful in that which is least, and God will give you a crown of everlasting life.

Sermon XXIV.

OLD WELLS.

GENESIS XXVI. 18.

“And Isaac digged again the wells of water which they had digged in the days of Abraham his father, for the Philistines had stopped them after the death of Abraham; and he called their names after the names by which his father had called them.”



SOME things are best when they are old, like old wine, old friends, old memories, old homes. The world offers us all sorts of novelties, new-fangled fashions and pleasures, but we say—The old is better. Some of us would not exchange the memory of the old home where they lived, the old garden where they played, the old porch with the roses growing round it, for a king's palace or the finest gardens in the world. Some of us have got an old picture in an album, a poor, faded thing, perhaps, not worth a farthing to anyone else, yet we would not lose it for the finest pic-

— Old Wells.

ture gallery in the world. People point to a book on our table, and say—It is very old and worn, why do you keep it? And we answer—It belonged to my mother. Isaac believed in the old wells which his father had digged. He could have digged new wells, but he said—The old is best, my father knew the value of a good well, and pure water, there is none like that. Do you remember how David, in a time of great danger and anxiety, longed for a drink of water from the well of Bethlehem by the gate? There were plenty of other springs, but none so sweet as that. There are many people now in far-off lands, amid the beauties of tropic scenery, who long to see the wild hills of Dartmoor, and drink of the water of the stream which flows by the gate of home. Oh, the old wells are best. The wells of life are many, do not neglect the old ones.

There is *the Bible well*, the well of God's precious promises, the well of the pure water of life, a very old well. Your father knew it, and loved it. I have seen a Bible which has been read by father, grandfather, and great grandfather. Eyes which have long been closed in this world read the old words, and the old well is just as pure and fresh as ever to-day. When Sir Walter Scott was dying, they asked him what book they should read to him, and

Old Wells. 50

he answered—*The Book*, there is none other like that. Oh, the Bible is a grand old well, our fathers prized it, and loved it, and suffered for it; they called it the Book of books, God's Holy Word, God's Treasury. Let us do the same, as Isaac called the names of the wells after the names which his father had called them. I believe in hereditary religion, handed down from father to son. The father who loves his Bible, and teaches his son to love it, the mother who reads it to her children, are doing the best thing to make them God-fearing parents in time to come.

Science teaches us a great deal about heredity; it points to a drunkard, and tells us that far back he had an ancestor who was a drunkard, it is in the blood, and must come out. So with madness, or passion, or cruelty, it is in the blood, and it will come out from generation to generation. So with a good example, if you find a man digging the old wells of salvation, like Abraham, you will generally find his son digging at the same well, like Isaac.

We read that Isaac's servants digged in the valley, and found there wells of springing water. The valley of humility is the right place to dig in, not the top of the mountain of pride. Some people never find the well of springing water, because they

do not dig in the right place. They are too proud, too full of self, too puffed up with their own knowledge and cleverness; they want to be on the top, high up in the pulpit, or platform, or desk, instead of down in the valley. The lowly and meek dig in the valley, and find the spring of water; the proud man lectures from the platform of his own knowledge, and finds nothing at all. Too many people want to climb up high, and write a commentary of their own, instead of going down on their knees and reading God's Word humbly. Dig down in the valley, my brethren, come humbly to God, seek, and ye shall find, and God's Word shall be to you a springing well; as cold water to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country.

Isaac digged the old wells because the Philistines had stopped them after the death of Abraham. There are plenty of such Philistines now, who make it their business to stop, or poison, the wells of salvation. They try to block up the old Bible well with their own rubbish, so that men cannot get at the precious springs. After Abraham's death they stopped the wells against Isaac. Perhaps it is the same with some of you. You had a godly father, who read the Bible, and digged the well of living water, and died. Then you fell into other company, who proved to be the Philistines. They said to

Old Wells.

you—What, do you believe in that old Book, it is worn out, the old well has run dry, it is only a collection of fairy tales. You never saw the sun wait for a battle to be fought, or heard an ass talk, these are all fairy tales, people know better in these days. Each comes with his argument, his sneer, his doubt, and drops it like a stone into the old well, and gives you nothing better in return. No one was never happier for picking the Bible to pieces, and trying to get rid of Calvary Cross, and the resurrection, and the life of the world to come. We may get rid of our belief in these things, but we shall live unhappy, and die wretched. Many stop the old well, and perish of thirst and hunger.

Oh, give me the old well of the Bible. I look into a clear well, and I see God's blue Heaven reflected. I look into the Bible well, and I see God's Heaven reflected there, and I think—There is my home, if I but persevere; there remaineth a rest for the people of God,

“Jerusalem on high, My song and city is.”

You see a child crying, it has lost its way, it cannot see its way home, and you take the child by the hand, and point over the fields, and say—There is your home. We often lose our way, and we are sad and weary, then we look into the Bible well,

— Old Wells.

and we see Heaven, our home, and our tears are dry.

There are many springs in the Bible well, the best of them is *consolation*. We bathe our hot, tear-stained eyes in cold water, and we can find comfort and consolation for our sad hearts in the old well of the Bible. Philistines try to stop the old well, and dig new wells of their own, wells of science, discovery, unbelief, but who ever got a draught of comfort out of them? Your little child dies, and one of the new comforters come, and says—Your child is dead, it was so much flesh, and bone, and blood, so much lime, and phosphates, and this and that, and all is worn out, and of no use any more, and the child is dead and gone. Is that any comfort to you, when you stand by the little white form which you used to fondle? I cannot away with these Philistines who stop the spring of consolation. Your own time comes to die; what a send-off these people give you. They say—It is the common lot, this or that organ is worn out, this or that part is diseased, you could not possibly live. You say—Where am I going? And they answer—Oh, nowhere, we do not know; it is ashes to ashes, dust to dust, that is all we know. I should not like to pass out of this life like that, I would rather go to the old spring of consolation, and read—"I am the resurrection and the life; who hath the Son, hath eternal

Old Wells. 50

life; in My Father's House are many mansions, I go to prepare a place for you."

Then there is the spring of *pardon*. The child of a loving parent wants to be forgiven, if it has done wrong. It says—Mother, I am sorry; father, I am no more worthy to be called thy son. The sinner wants pardon; he can take his punishment, but he wants forgiveness. Well, where is he to look for it? The world never forgives, society never forgives. Talk to the world about a troubled conscience, or an aching heart, and it will laugh at you, it does not understand. The world never forgives the fallen, it worships the man at the top, it tramples on the man who has failed. You say—I have sinned, and the world buttons up its pockets, and turns its back, and locks its doors against you, and says—It is your own fault, there is no one else to blame but yourself; go away, please. Oh, the world's well is a very dry one for comfort or pardon. I go to the old spring of forgiveness in the old well, and I see One called Jesus eating with publicans and sinners, One called the Friend of sinners, not ashamed to touch the penitent sinful woman, saying to her, "Come unto Me; go in peace, thy sins are forgiven thee."

There is one more old well which we can dig, the *well of memory*. Some people tell us it is wrong


to look back into the past, and remember former things. Not so, if we do it in a right spirit. Some of the best books are old books, and some of the best teachers are old men. It is good to remember a time when we were better and purer than we are now, when we feared God, when we prayed, when we loved our mother. A time when we could blush at a bad word or a filthy song. Some of us could not blush now if we tried. It is good to remember when we lived very near to God, because we were innocent. There was a boy once who fell into bad company and evil ways, and was sent to a reformatory. The superintendent tried to get at his heart, but the boy was hard and defiant, and refused to tell his name. Then said the other—Had you a mother who loved you? “Yes, and she used to put her hand on my head and pray for me; I wish I could feel her hand now.” And the boy burst into tears, and through his sobs told his name. Oh, the well of memory is a blessed thing, when the remembrance of God’s love and our sins turns us into better ways. Dig out the old wells, brethren, dig in the valley of a humble, trusting faith, and you shall find a well of water springing up to everlasting life.

Sermon XXV.

THOROUGHNESS.

ECCLESIASTES IX. 10.

“Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.”

 KING PHILIP II. of Spain used to say—Time and I against any two. Such a man was sure to succeed, at least, in worldly matters. Everyone must, to a certain extent, trust in himself, and do his best. The man who says—I could never climb that hill, never gets to the top of anything. The man who makes no effort to swim will drown; the man who will not press forward is left behind; he who will not try never succeeds. Work done with our might is the universal law. The Greek philosopher said—Do thine own work, and know thyself. The old Roman wrote—Nothing is accomplished without labour. It has been said—Strait and narrow is the gate which leads to any kingdom worth having. No one enters the Promised Land

❧ Thoroughness.

without journeying and struggling in the wilderness; for, as someone says, "Nothing comes of itself, at least nothing good, it has to be fetched." If you want knowledge, you must toil for it; if you want food, you must work for it; if you want Heaven, you must labour to enter into rest; you must strive to enter in at the strait gate. No man ever got to the top of anything without climbing, or to the bottom of anything without digging. The men who have become great rulers, leaders, teachers, worked with their might. The rule of life is that "There is always work, and tools to work with, for those who will." Everyone knows that to succeed in earthly matters he must put both hands to his work, and do it with all his might. [The wonder is that people do not see the necessity of ^{work} ~~this~~ in religion. They will work for the world, but not for God; they will labour to enter in at the gate of success, but not at the gate of Heaven. They will toil hard in the world's vineyard, and stand idle in God's. They will lay up treasure for the body, and leave the soul to starve. They will rise early, and so late take rest for the sake of a short life, and neglect eternity altogether.] If people were half as much in earnest about their religious duties as they are about their worldly concerns, all would be well.

Thoroughness.

How, then, ought we to do our duty to God? Just as we do our earthly business, with our might, we should put our whole heart and strength into it. Religion should be the first thing, "Seek ye first the Kingdom of Heaven." God first, is every true man's motto. "I must be about my Father's business," should be the mainspring, the principle, of our life. Next, we must, to a certain extent, depend on ourselves. Do thine own work, and know thyself. No man succeeds unless he is self-reliant. If he says—I could never paint a great picture, he never will; if he says, I could never win a battle, he never will. He must know his own power, and trust to it up to a certain point. A painter does not want someone to hold his hand while he works; a man climbing a ladder does not want someone to put his feet on the rungs; he knows what he can do, and he does it. So in the business of religion. The poor, cowardly creature who says—It is of no use trying to resist evil, I am so weak; it is of no use to make good resolutions, I am sure to break them; it is useless trying to lead a good life, I am so easily tempted, never succeeds. We all, of course, need to hold God's Hand, but we need not be carried through life like babies, we must learn to feel our feet. We must trust to ourselves to a certain degree, but we must know ourselves first. If a man with

of Thoroughness.

weak limbs says—I trust to my strong legs and arms, it is folly. If a blind man says—I trust to my clear sight; or if a fool says—I trust to my cleverness, they must fail. We must know ourselves, our strength and weakness; we must know that God is with us, and that He can save to the uttermost; we must believe that God's servants can always do God's work, and that He will carry them through all difficulties and temptations. So trusting in God, and on our own right arm, we shall go on and succeed.

The man who makes up his mind to do his duty, asking God's help in prayer and Sacrament, must win, must find his Promised Land, though perhaps not here. What I would say to you is, be in earnest about your religion, be as anxious to serve God as to succeed in the world, put the same care and thought and labour and heart into God's business as into man's. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might."

This requires (1) *courage*. Physical courage is common, moral courage is rare. The worst sort of coward is he who is ashamed to confess Christ, and there are many such. There were the Jewish Rulers. "Among the chief Rulers many believed on Him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue;

Thoroughness. 50

for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God." How many of those miserable cowards we have among us now. They believe in Christ, but are afraid to say so; they are ashamed of their Saviour, afraid of what men will say about them, afraid of being laughed at; so they hear Christ, their Lord, spoken against, and His Church abused, and are afraid to say—I am on the Lord's side, I am a Churchman. Many a man is brave enough to win the Victoria Cross, and afraid to take up the Cross of Christ, and would blush to be found upon his knees in prayer. It is a poor soldier who is ashamed of his uniform, and he is a poor Christian who is ashamed of Christ. Brethren, do not be like Nicodemus, and came to Jesus by night; if you believe in Him, let all men know it and see it.

Some people say—I keep my religion to myself. Then it is of no use to anyone, it is like a dark lantern, it neither lights you nor your neighbour. Let your light shine before men. One says—I quite believe in religion, but I do not like to say so, because it would make me unpopular among my friends. Such an one is a coward, and his religion is vain. Be unpopular, be put out of the synagogue, it is better to be outside with Jesus than inside without Him. Be brave, show Whose ye are, and Whom you serve. There is nothing so pitiful as a Christian

of Thoroughness.

trying to appear something else. Remember that the Master said, "Whosoever shall confess Me before men, him shall the Son of Man confess before the angels of God ; but he that denieth Me before men shall be denied before the angels of God."

Next, if we are in earnest about religion, we must *look upon it as the first and chief thing in our life*. We always do the most important thing first ; remember that religion is the most important thing. Some people do not understand this, they think religion is of small importance compared with worldly business, something for an idle hour or so once a week, something to be taken up and laid down at pleasure. Look at the average man in the market or other place of business and in God's Church. He who was so keen, so wide awake, so attentive, in the one, is languid, careless, indifferent in the other. Look at a man asking a favour from his fellow-men, and saying his prayer to Almighty God ; see him reading his bank book and his Bible, and mark the contrast. People commonly say—Business, work, money-making first ; not so, it should be God first. What will all our work, our business, our labour do for us when we come to die ? What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul ? What if the door

Thoroughness. So

of success be open to us, but the door of Heaven be shut? Do you think God has a Heaven for those who are the mere slaves of labour, who live only to make money, and have no higher hope than a balance at the bank? You talk to the average man about an investment, and he is all attention, but if you talk about religion he will not listen. If a lawyer were to say to you—Next month you will lose all your money if you are not careful, you would not neglect the warning; if I tell you that you will lose your soul if you neglect so great a salvation, you smile, and walk away. Brethren, put your duty to God first, and do it with your might, take two hands to it.

Be *in earnest about your prayers*. Mark the difference between a man conducting business with his fellow-men and speaking to God; he would be bankrupt if he managed his business as he does his prayers. If one writes a business-letter, he expects an answer, and he continues to write till he gets it. If he wants to win commercial success, he waits, he watches, he asks, and keeps on asking till he gets what he wants. Now look at the average prayer, it is a mere form, cold, faithless; we do not seem to believe that God promises to hear and answer prayer; we do not think about the answer, or wait for it, or continue asking till the answer comes, so

✧ Thoroughness.

that our prayer is like a letter without address, and we get no answer. Brethren, when you pray, cling to God with both hands, say with Jacob, "I will not let Thee go unless Thou bless me," pray with your might.

Next, *be in earnest in your Church-going.* Much of our Church-going is mere waste of time. If we do not go to God's Church to pray, to praise, to worship, with the best member that we have, it is but lost time. The man who is sleepy and bored in Church on Sunday, and active and busy in his work on Monday, is not serving God.

Next, *be in earnest in receiving the Blessed Sacrament.* Some of us come to the Altar only now and then, after months of absence. Why is it? Because they do not set a right value on the Blessed Sacrament; they fail to see that it is the life of their soul, everything to them. If the doctor says you must take certain food as medicine regularly, or you will die, you do not neglect it. If Jesus Christ says, "Unless ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His Blood, ye have no life in you," you do not believe it, and you do not care.

Again, *be in earnest about your Bible reading.* People will read a story with laughing lips and tearful eyes, and go to sleep over the words of God's truth; they will read eagerly the columns of a news-

Thoroughness. So

paper, and never look at the good news of the Gospel. It is sometimes said that someone has his whole heart and soul in his work ; it is a good thing to do one's work with all our might, but first, and above all, we should put our heart and soul into our religion. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might," and do it now, while it is called to-day, "for there is neither work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither thou goest."

Sermon XXVI.

NOT NOW, BUT HEREAFTER.

S. JOHN XIII. 7.

"Jesus answered and said unto him—What I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter."

HOW little the wisest of us know! The longer I live, the more I feel my ignorance. How little the disciples knew of Jesus and His acts. They thought that they should follow an earthly King, and have power, and honour and glory. They asked to sit one on the right Hand and another on the left Hand in His Kingdom. They dreamed of a golden crown and a jewelled sceptre. Instead of an earthly King they saw a poor Man standing among them, as one who serves; instead of a palace they saw a stable and a manger; in place of honour and glory they beheld Him despised and rejected of men, a humble worker in the carpenter's shop. Instead of a throne,

Not Now, but Hereafter. 20

there was the Cross; in place of a crown of gold and a jewelled sceptre a crown of thorns and a broken reed. They understood not these things, so Jesus said of all His ministry, "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter."

Yes, the disciples knew after the Holy Spirit came to them at Pentecost, they understood that Christ's Kingdom is not of this world, that their own crown was not to be one of earthly success, but one of thorny troubles here, of glory hereafter. They learnt that he who takes the lowest place is exalted, that to be a Christian means to be like Christ, patient, meek, unselfish, thinking of others, living for others, dying for others. Yes, they understood hereafter.

When Jesus said, "What I do thou knowest not now," He was about to wash the disciples' feet. He, their Master, their Lord, the longed-for, the prayed-for Messiah, of Whom all the prophets had spoken, the Son of the living God, took the form of a servant, and washed His disciples' feet. No wonder that they did not understand, but they understood hereafter. It was a great object lesson of humility, a great warning against pride. To us it is an object lesson also against pride of any sort; spiritual pride, pride of rank or position, or wealth, or cleverness. Jesus says—If I, your Lord

Not Now, but Hereafter.

and Master, have washed your feet, ye ought also to wash one another's feet. The curse of the Church, of society, to-day, is pride, the feeling that we are better than our fellows. If Jesus Christ washed His disciples' feet, we ought to wash one another's feet, that is, we ought to forget ourselves and think of the wants of others. How many weary, foot-sore people there are in the world limping along life's rough way, and in need of a helping hand! There are sinners, whose souls and lives want washing. Jesus Christ, of course, can alone wash away sin, but we must do our part, we must seek out the sinful and wandering, we must set an example, and give hope, and help, and encouragement. We must help to pull them out of the mire and bring them to Jesus. We must not throw stones at them, or put difficulties in their way, or turn from them with loathing. You say, perhaps, they are so wicked, so ungrateful, so sin-stained, then there is all the more need for cleansing; go, and wash your brethren's feet.

Then there are plenty of tired, foot-sore people with sad hearts, weary, disappointed; they need washing; they need tears of sympathy, love's precious ointment, for the sore feet, love's tenderness for the sore heart. Their feet have climbed the Hill Difficulty, have trodden the stony path of sorrow, and trampled through the lonely wilderness of

Not Now, but Hereafter. 30

poverty, sickness, want. They need comfort; go, and wash your brethren's feet.

You tell me you can do so little. Do your diligence to give gladly of that little. When you do a little act of kindness you do not know what you do now, it is like sowing a little seed in the ground, but hereafter you find it a lovely flower. It was a little thing for Jesus to wash the disciples' feet, but it meant so much, and taught so much. It is a little thing to give up a meal to feed the starving, or to read to a sick person, or wipe away a child's tears, to give a cup of cold water to the thirsty, to carry flowers to a sick room, these are all little things. It is a little thing to give a kind word to a neighbour, or do a kind act to some of God's animals, these are little things, but precious in God's sight.

One of old tells us how the Athenian High Court, or Senate, was one day sitting on Mars' Hill, when a hawk was seen chasing a little sparrow, which flew for safety to the breast of one of the judges. The man cruelly flung the bird from him, and dashed it dead upon the stones. Then his brother judges sat in judgment, and banished him from Athens, saying, that a man who was cruel to animals was unfit to judge men. Doth God care for sparrows, for oxen? Yea, verily, and blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. When we sow little

☛ Not Now, but Hereafter.

seeds of kindness we know not what we do now, but we shall know hereafter, and shall find our seeds grown into a crown of flowers in Paradise, a crown which is everlasting.

“What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.” That is true of all God’s dealings with us. The first thing which God does for us is to bring us, by the ministry of His Church, to Holy Baptism. Foolish people sneer, and say—What is the use? The child does not know, cannot understand. Then God says, “What I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.” He takes that little life and grafts it into the Body of Christ’s Church, and sows a little seed of grace in its heart. The child does not know, but it grows, and the seed grows also, and hereafter the child knows the blessing and privilege of being the child of God, a member of Christ, and an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven. Later we are led to Confirmation, and the Altar of the Blessed Sacrament, and God says, “What I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.” We cannot fully know and understand those great mysteries of the laying on of hands and of the Holy Eucharist. We cannot know now the full meaning of those words, “Take, eat, this is My Body.” But we know hereafter the new strength, and faith, and hope given

Not Now, but Hereafter. 50

to us by being joined to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

God sends us many trials, sorrows, losses, and says to us, "What I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." We ask—Why am I so smitten and afflicted, why are my fondest hopes disappointed, my cherished plans shattered; why this poverty, this loneliness, this pain? Why, when my child was taken, my dear ones removed, was I left behind? Then God says, "Thou shalt know hereafter," and we learn to find our sick bed a battle-field, where we fight the hardest of battles, and gain the greatest of victories; a cross, where we crucified our own will, and learnt to say, "Thy will be done"; a garden, where we cultivated the sweet flowers of resignation and patience, a camping ground where God's angels stayed and comforted us. Oh, to God's true servant, the bed where we lie sick, or crippled, or paralyzed, becomes a true gate of Paradise, a school where we learn the greatest and the best of lessons.

"What I do, thou knowest not now." We see the rain pouring down from a black sky, and we murmur. Next morning we see the grass and the flowers refreshed and renewed and beautified, then we know the meaning of the rain. So in times of sorrow, when the clouds hang darkly over us, and

Not Now, But Hereafter.

our tears are our meat day and night, we know not the reason. Hereafter we know that we are the better for our sorrows, that our lives are beautified by our tears, like the grass by the rain. The soldier who has been through many battles has the scars of wounds upon him, and we think more of him than of the smooth-faced boy who never fought. So the best Christian has scars upon him, the marks of many a hard battle with temptation, the print of the nails, the sign of the Cross, tokens of victory. When the wound came, we did not know, but we shall know hereafter. When our child, our nearest and dearest, are taken away from us, God says, "What I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." Then we learn that they were taken that we might learn to follow them; they were taken to God to draw us nearer to God, to teach us to look up, to climb the ladder set up from earth to Heaven, and so

"Journey till we reach the Heavenly town
Where are laid up our treasure and our crown,
And our lost loved ones will be found again."

Pain and sorrow are great mysteries, but after all they are only God's ploughshares. Our life is like a field; if it is to bring forth fruit it must be ploughed and broken.

Not Now, But Hereafter. 50

“ Where grows the golden grain?
Where faith? Where sympathy?
In a furrow cut by pain.”

No one ever reaped a harvest of good things, noble aims, saintly life, without having felt the sharp edge of sorrow. A field unploughed is full of weeds and briars, so is a life.

Once more, when we sin through our most grievous fault, knowing the right, yet choosing the wrong, God says—What thou doest, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter. That is the most awful part of sin, we do not know how bad it is, or how great will be the consequences of our wrong acts. No one would deliberately sin if he could see the future, and the results of sin. When Judas saw Christ crucified he knew what he had done, and he was driven to suicide. So we may think sin a trifle now, and of little importance; we do not know now, but we shall know hereafter. The child thinks it a trifle to play with fire; hereafter, when he sees his father's house burnt down, he knows what he has done.

We shall know hereafter. It may be that the laugh of ours which drove someone from the Altar, goes on echoing for ever through the mirthless halls of the lost; it may be that the white, innocent soul which we killed by our lust will haunt us for ever

❧ Not Now, but Hereafter.


through the dark regions of hereafter; it may be, it *must* be, that the memory of past sin, of young lives wrecked, of fond hearts broken, of trust betrayed, will hang like a chain upon us through all eternity. Yes, memory becomes the true hell, and remorse the fire which is never quenched. I beseech you, if you are tempted to sin, stop and think—What I do, I know not now, but I shall know hereafter.

Sermon XXVII.

TALENTS.

S. MATTHEW XXV. 14.

"The Kingdom of Heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods."

O understand the object lesson in this parable, we must remember that the Kingdom of Heaven is not the next world, but this present world. So the object lesson is for to-day, for every day. The parable shows us a man of property, calling his servants, and delivering to them his goods of different values, making them his agents, bidding them use the property to the best advantage, and make the most of it, and then going away and leaving them to their work. The man of property means Almighty God, Who made all things, and owns all things in Heaven and earth, Jesus Christ, from Whom all good things

come. He called His own servants, that is you and me, His servants, made so in Holy Baptism ; He delivered unto them His goods, *His*, not theirs. Nothing which we have is our own, we are servants, entrusted with our Master's goods, agents, not principals ; stewards, not owners. We talk of our strength, or cleverness, or success, but these things are not ours, but God's. In the battle of life we fight with God's sword, in the workshop of life we use God's tools ; what have we which we did not receive ? You talk about my land, my park, my cornfield ; but they are not yours, but God's. You might as well point up to the sky and say, my Heaven.

Here, then, is our first lesson, nothing which we have is our own. God puts us here as agents, as stewards, He lends us His goods for us to use to advantage. God has, in some sort, left us to ourselves, He is the Man travelling into a far country. When Jesus founded His Church on earth He did not stay with it in bodily form, He said it was expedient for the Church that He should go away. It was expedient for the Apostles to have to stand alone, to feel their feet, as it were. So a father takes his son to school, and says to him—You cannot always have me by you, you must learn to make your own way, to fight your own battles. The

Talents. So

master says to the workman—You cannot have me always here to hold your hand, you must learn to work for yourself. So Jesus journeys into the far country of Heaven, and leaves us on earth to carry on the work of His Church. The child never learns to walk if the parent's hand is always holding it, or to swim, if another always bears him up. God helps us, but we must work.

To one servant the master gave five talents, to another two, to another one. God never makes two men just alike, nor starts them on the journey of life with exactly the same equipment. Some are stronger than others, some weaker, some quicker, some slower; some have one character or temperament, others another—five talents, two, one. One man's clothes do not exactly fit another, each man's gifts are according to his ability to use them. Life is very like a railroad, with all sorts of lines and tracks upon it. God does not start all men on the same line of life, with the same amount of luggage, the same advantages and gifts and property. Have you ever stayed at a great railway station, and watched the various trains sent off? It is a very instructive object lesson of life. The trains are not all alike in appearance, or character, or purpose. Here is a special train, to carry the King at vast speed across England. Here is a slow train, which

stops at every little station to take up or deliver passengers. Here is a black, dirty train laden with coal, or a goods train bearing heavy burdens, or a breakdown train going to help a wrecked engine off the line. I think our lives are like that, very different in character, brilliant or dull, fast trains or slow ; but all alike have an object, a duty, a destination. The servants in the parable did not all receive the same amount of goods, but all had to do the same thing, to use them in the master's service, not for their own selfish pleasure. So we have got to do the best we can with what God gives us. The railway superintendent does not ask a servant whether he would prefer to drive the express or the coal train, he gives him his work, and says—Do your best. God does not say to us—What will you have, what will you do? He says—Take these five talents, or these two talents, or this one talent, and use them for Me ; go, work in My vineyard, My workshop, My Church ; occupy till I come.

God knows exactly of what we are capable, He knows exactly what we are fit for, what we can bear, what amount of light we can give. Men put themselves in false positions. God never puts the wrong man in the wrong place. If a man can use five talents, he receives five ; if he can only use one, he receives one. Remember, it is not the number of

Talents. 50

talents that matters, but the way in which we employ them. We cannot all be at the top, some must be at the bottom, but it is just as important a position in one sense. The driver of the royal express train is the man with the five talents, the humble fireman who piles on the coal is the man of one talent, but he is just as important in a way. One man has to pilot the train at great speed, he is the man of five talents; another has to hold out a signal flag, he is the man of one talent, but the welfare of the train depends upon him. One man stands up in a pulpit, and preaches a grand sermon, he has the five talents; another tolls the Church bell to summon the people to worship, he has only one talent, but if he neglects his duty the preacher's work fails. In God's great Church everyone has his place, his work, his talent or talents.

God's great concert of the world's work cannot go on unless everyone does his part, however humble. The man with one talent has his work as well as the one with five. God wills that all sorts and conditions of men should depend on each for mutual help; the strong must aid the weak, the healthy the sick; very often the man of five talents cannot do without the man of one talent. A skilled mechanic was sent to repair the weather-cock on the top of a Church steeple. It was a work of great difficulty

and danger ; at last he reached the top of the last ladder, and behind him was a broad-shouldered labourer, carrying a brazier of burning coals, and a pot of molten lead. The mechanic got on the shoulders of the labourer, who passed to him the molten lead and the necessary tools. When the men came down the labourer was staggering and reeling, and it was seen that while the mechanic worked, some of the boiling lead dropped on the breast of the other, burning him horribly. But his duty was to bear the worker on his shoulders, and he did it. What the man with the one talent can do is to be faithful in using it. People say—If I had that man's wealth, or influence, or position, I could do great things ; but it is not true. If you cannot do your duty with the one talent which you have, you will not do it with five others.

When boys enter a school they are not all put in the highest form ; some are classed in one, some in another, according to their capacity. In a workshop some are apprentices, just beginning to learn, some are skilled workmen, some master craftsmen. So in the Church, God's workshop, God's school, everyone has a place, and God never makes mistakes. He gives to every man his work, just what he can do, just the burden he can bear, five talents to the man who can use five, one talent to the man

Talents. 50

who can only use one, and God expects every man to use what he has as well as he can.

Each servant in the parable, except one, gained something in proportion to what he had received. The five talents produced five more ; if God gives us great powers, great gifts, He expects great results. We must not use talents of cleverness, eloquence, work for self only, but for God, for the good of our fellow-men. The man who rules the Church as a Bishop, or the State as a Minister, who wins souls by his preaching, or discovers the mysteries of science for the good of his fellow-men, is the man of five talents, and he gains five more. The plain man of business, or the simple countryman, is the man of two talents ; he is not brilliant, or famous, but he is a good father, a good neighbour, an honest dealer and worker. He does his duty, he sets a good example, his two talents gain two more, and both alike earn the praise, "Well done, good and faithful servant." The simplest of us can use our talent by showing a good example ; if we cannot be a lighthouse, we can be a rushlight.

What of the man with one talent ? He went and dug in the earth and hid it. He did not throw it away in extravagance, nor spend it, nor gamble with it, he simply buried it, and made no use of it. There are thousands of people like that slothful servant,

☛ Talents.

they do not commit any open act of wickedness, the world calls them very respectable, yet they are condemned because they do nothing for God. They bury the talent which God gave them. Such a man is his own sexton, he digs a grave for his talents, his time, his money, his opportunities of daily good, and he also buries himself, and it is a burial from which there is no resurrection except in hell. Do you remember the rich man in the parable? Why was he in hell? We are not told that he was an evil liver, or that he did any harm, but he never did any good. He had wealth, power, influence, and he buried them and himself.

Brethren, what are you doing with your talents? God has given His goods, His good things, to us all. What are they? Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Redeemer, some of us never think of Him. The Gospel of love and mercy, some of us never look at it. The Sacraments and means of grace, some of us utterly neglect them. Prayer, some of us never pray. The teaching and ministry of the Church, some of us turn our backs upon them. Time and opportunity for doing good, for glorifying God, for helping our neighbour, some of our lives are all for self.

Well, we must give an account some day. After a long time the lord of these servants cometh and

Talents. 50

reckoneth with them, and says to each—What hast thou done? He will say it to you some day. You may say—I have only one talent, I am small and of no reputation; you have got to account for that one talent. Where is it buried? Go and dig it up with penitent tears, dig it up, and start afresh. Look the future in the face; for you and for me there can be but one of two sentences, “Well done, good and faithful servant,” or, “Take ye the unprofitable servant, and cast him into outer darkness.”

Sermon XXVIII.

GOD'S MESSAGE.

2 TIMOTHY III. 16.

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.”



HERE are people who think that the New Testament only was written for our learning, and so neglect the writings of the Old Testament. There are people also who try to pick to pieces the earlier books of the Bible, who say that Moses could not have written them, that the details of history are wrong, and also the arithmetic, and the science, and the geography. But we do not read the Bible to learn science, or arithmetic, or geography, but to learn about God's message to mankind, which tells us that the man who lives righteously, and keeps God's Commandments, is blessed ; that he who breaks God's Com-

God's Message. So

mandments by sinning is punished. God gave this message to men to repeat, and, being men, they made mistakes in repeating the message, but the message remains. If I read the account of a great battle in the newspapers, I do not disbelieve it because there are some names wrongly spelt, and the number of killed and wounded is not quite accurate. We must remember that the writers of the first books of the Bible were not newspaper correspondents, with telegraphs and swift trains to convey their news. The message which they bring was handed down from father to son for hundreds and thousands of years, and so there were sure to be some differences in the telling. It seems to me to matter very little who the men were who wrote the message, as long as we have the message. We are taught in the history of Creation, of the Flood, of the Patriarchs, of the Children of Israel, that those who obey God have the blessing, and that they who sin against Him suffer. This is the message of the whole Bible, and over all is the glorious promise of the Saviour, first given in Paradise, and going all through the Book to the end of the Revelation.

Take the story of the Creation. There are people who find great difficulties in it, and say it is impossible. We have no right to say so, nothing is impossible to God. Man must have had a begin-

ning, and he could not have begun without God, nothing begins itself. Look at the story of the Fall. It does not matter whether the tree of knowledge, of good and evil, and the tree of life were real actual trees, or only parables, object lessons. It does not matter whether the forbidden fruit was real fruit, or only a figure of speech, the great fact remains. The fact that man, whilst innocent and obedient, is happy, and close to God. If he disobeys, and learns the taste of sin, he is miserable, and is shut out from God ; it was so in the beginning, it is so now. The gates of Paradise are shut against the wilful sinner, but the promise remains that "if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness ; as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive."

Take the story of the Flood. To me it matters not whether the flood covered the whole world, or, as is doubtless the fact, only that part known to the writer. There remains the fact that God sends a flood to punish sin, a flood of water, or of fire, or of war, or of pestilence. Those only were saved who are close to God, safe in the Ark of the Church. It does not matter whether the ark was a few feet bigger or smaller than the account says, there is the great object lesson that God's faithful are saved,

God's Message. So

and the wicked destroyed. History tells us this. God sent the great flood of Roman soldiers upon Jerusalem for its sins, and those only were saved who were Christians, safe in the ark of the Church. Long ages after Sodom and Gomorrah, God sent a flood of fire upon Pompeii and Herculaneum for their terrible sins. When the Roman world had filled up the measure of its wickedness, God sent a flood of barbarians, who conquered it. Many great cities, including London, have been visited by a flood of plague and pestilence. There is the great truth, the golden object lesson, that great plagues remain for the ungodly, and there is only safety in the ark of Christ's Church.

For us, as for Noah, there is the covenant of grace, for us, as for him, there is the rainbow promise of God's mercy. God's covenant with man has always existed. With Noah it was the covenant of mercy, promising that there should be no more destruction by flood. With the patriarch it was the promise of a Son, in Whom all the families of the earth should be blessed. With Israel in the wilderness it was the assurance that God would raise up for them a prophet like unto Moses. Under the Kings, it was a pledge that a king should sit on the throne of David. In the times of Isaiah it was the promise of a suffering Saviour, and all these things pointed

God's Message.

to Jesus Christ, the Seed of the woman, the Prophet, the King, the Sufferer, the Saviour.

We have a covenant, the Christian covenant. In Holy Baptism the rainbow of God's promise overshadows us, telling us that we are God's children. In Confirmation we have the covenant renewed, when we promise to be Christ's soldiers to the end. In Holy Communion the blessed rainbow of God's love shines upon us, teaching us that we are in Christ, and He in us, One Body.

Take the story of Abraham. It is the story of a dim, distant past, when men could not read or write, but were simple shepherds and wandering tribes. The story was handed down from generation to generation by word of mouth, and we cannot expect to find it like a volume of modern history. Some of the dates and ages may be wrong, but what does it matter, the great fact remains. In a godless world, Abraham is the first to worship and serve God, he and his family form the Church of God. From it grew the Jewish Church, from which again grew the Christian Church. So from Abraham comes the Church of Christ. God's promise to Abraham is also our promise, that in his seed all the families of the earth should be blessed, and that promise was fulfilled in Christ Jesus, in Whom we and all His Church have received the blessing.

God's Message. So

Every part of Abraham's story is full of lessons. Wherever he went he built an altar, and sacrificed to God. This teaches us to set up an altar of worship, of family prayer, private prayer, public prayer, wherever we are. Look at the parting of Abraham and Lot. Lot chose the world, Abraham chose God. The same choice lies before you and me, the Sodom of the world, the Sodom of sin, of dishonest wealth, or God and duty. Abraham's prayer for sinful Sodom shows us the duty of intercessory prayer, prayer for all those who sin against us, injure us, speak evil of us.

Look again at Abraham ready to sacrifice Isaac. Some people shrink from this story, and say it was wicked of Abraham to consent to kill his son, and that the Bible cannot be true if it says that he was right. We must remember, however, that Abraham lived in different times from ourselves, and among a different people. Children were the absolute property of their parents, with whom rested the power of life or death, just as some natives now sell their daughters in marriage for so many cattle. Isaac was the most precious possession which Abraham owned, and he was willing to give him up at God's command. Surely here is a grand lesson for us, the duty of self-sacrifice, of giving up, if need be, what we love best; and the

¶ God's Message.

need of a perfect faith in God, teaching us that what He bids us do must be right. Also this is a great object lesson of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the only Beloved Son, the lamb provided to die on Mount Moriah, the very place where Abraham built his altar.

Look also at the story of Esau and Jacob. It is a picture of the worldly man and the spiritual man. Esau cares only for the amusement of the chase, and the taste of his dinner. There are many like him to-day, for whom amusement and worldly pleasure mean everything. They sit down to eat and drink, and rise up to play, God is not in all their thoughts. Yes, there are plenty of modern Esaus. Jacob looks forward to higher things, the blessing and the birthright, and he is chosen, and Esau rejected. When Esau's mess of pottage is eaten there is nothing left. So now, when a man cannot hunt, or play games, or eat dinners any more, what is left? Nothing; he chose no blessing, and he has none. Jacob chooses the better part, and so he sees God's angels all through his life. So we know that the Lord is always with us, that the ladder is set up from earth to Heaven, and the angels of God guarding us. We can cling to Jesus, as Jacob did to the angel, and never leave off praying till we get our blessing.

God's Message. 50

Once more, look at the story of Joseph. It does not matter if the dates are not all correct, and if there are some gaps in the history. The Bible does not profess to be a complete history of those times, the beautiful story and the beautiful moral remain to us. It is the story of many a young man besides Joseph. It is the story of one who, at home, was his father's darling, and so was hated by his jealous relatives, who try to injure him. He is banished from home, and becomes a slave in a foreign land, far from his father's house. Yet he never forgets God, or prayer, or duty. There are such men now, far from home, on board ship, or out in wild lands, in the army or navy, far from the sound of English Church bells, yet close to their father's God. The story of Joseph is a story of a terrible temptation and a glorious victory. Every young man has to face it at some time, and the way to meet the temptation is to say as Joseph did, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"

The story of Joseph is also the story of one raised from the lowest to the highest place, from poverty and humiliation to wealth and power. So to-day, we see some poor lad driven from home, and becoming a millionaire in the Colonies. Joseph's head was not turned by prosperity, he always put duty in the front place, so he forgave and fed his starving

God's Message.

brethren who had wronged him so deeply, and returned good for evil. But, above all, the story of Joseph is a picture of our Lord Jesus Christ, the true Joseph, feeding His ungrateful brethren with the Bread of Heaven, and praying for all sinners, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Sermon XXIX.

THE GOSPEL OF CHEERFULNESS.

ECCLESIASTES III. 4.

“A time to laugh.”

MAN is the only one of God's creatures capable of laughter, this shows that God meant man to laugh, to be happy, to be cheerful. Some people deny the existence of God altogether, others believe Him to be harsh and stern, liking to see people miserable. I do not know which is the worse mistake. There are those who think that everything connected with God and religion is gloomy. They put on black when they go to Church, and sigh when they mention the Holy Name; they talk of this world as a vale of tears, and of death as being the most wretched of all things. It has been well said that they look on laughter as the breaking of their baptismal vow, on mirth as wanton, on wit as profane; they are scandalized at youth for being lively, and child-

The Gospel of Cheerfulness.

hood for being playful. They look on Church-going as they look on going to a funeral, and regard the clergyman like an undertaker. It is no wonder that some people dislike the very name of religion. If it made me miserable, I should dislike it too.

Do you remember that when the spies were sent into the Promised Land some of them came back with gloomy faces, and brought an evil report? They told the people that they could never enter there, there were too many difficulties and enemies, and so they discouraged the people. Others brought clusters of grapes from Eschol, to show what good things grew in the good land beyond Jordan. Brethren, if you dwell in the good land of God's Church, and know the blessings you have found there, tell others, tell the miserable people outside what good things God hath done for you. Bring a handful of blessings, a cluster of ripe fruit, show them the peace, the joy, the happiness which can only be found in the service of God. Show the outside world a cheerful countenance, a smiling face, show them that the religious man is the happy man, that he who loves God best can laugh best.

The people who put on a gloomy look and a sour expression in the name of religion disgust others with it, and force them to say—If this is religion, I will have none of it. But true religion

The Gospel of Cheerfulness.

never makes anyone sad ; the world is far more likely to make us weep than laugh. "Your joy," says our Lord, "no man taketh from you." If we dwell in the good land of Christ's Holy Church we shall want no manner of thing that is good, wherefore our mouth should be full of innocent, happy laughter. A man with a diseased eye sees all dark, the lightest day is clouded ; the sad man sees a sad world ; the discontented man sees nothing right. But the godly man is happy, he has a light inside him which makes all things light. He sees God's love reflected everywhere, shining in the sun, flashing in the rain, pictured in the flower, crystalized in the snow. He sees the fields stand so thick with corn that they seem to laugh and sing, and he wants to laugh and sing too. The man who goes through life thanking God is always cheerful ; he says—It is a time to laugh. The sight of a happy, cheerful face is the best sermon on religion. The sailor out on the dark sea loves the cheerful light in the lighthouse on shore ; so every cheerful Christian is like a lighthouse, cheering his fellows over the waves of this troublesome world.

" Of all the lights you carry in your face
Joy shineth farthest out to sea."

You who are happy in your religion bring your

—s The Gospel of Cheerfulness.

clusters from Eschol, your good fruits, your sweet flowers, and say—These grow in God's country, come over and abide with us.

Why, then, should God's people be happy and cheerful? First, because we believe in the *forgiveness of sins*. That alone brings true happiness. "Blessed, happy, is he whose transgression is forgiven, and whose sin is covered." A man may have rank, and wealth, and power, fine houses, and fine clothes, but if his conscience accuses him, if he is forced to say—My sin is ever before me, and it is not forgiven, he cannot be happy. I believe that a criminal sentenced to death may have any luxury in the shape of food at the last, but do you suppose that he enjoys these things? He knows that in a few hours he must die, and there is only one thing which can make him happy, and that is pardon. We have that pardon through the Precious Blood; "if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

"I believe in the forgiveness of sins." Some people say—I hope I am forgiven, or shall be forgiven; we *know* it. That woman in the Gospel came to Jesus, she had been a sinner, but she came penitent, and confessed her sins weeping, and Jesus said, "Go into peace, thy sins are forgiven thee." That

The Gospel of Cheerfulness. 50

woman did not doubt about it, she went away happy, because she was forgiven ; she had received absolution. So now Jesus pronounces absolution, the forgiveness of sins, through the mouth of His Church, "Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them." If we come penitent, we go away pardoned. We do not hope, or think, we believe in the forgiveness of sins. That is one reason for being cheerful and happy.

Another reason is, we know that we *have a loving Father*. Some people represent God as hard, stern, cruel, always on the watch to find us in fault, and to punish. We believe in our Father, One Who, like as a father pitieth his children, loves us. He hates our sins, but He loves His erring children, and is always ready to pardon, to give more than we ask ; always willing to take the prodigal son home again, the wandering sheep back to the fold. It is a grand thing to have a famous father, to be able to say—My father is a great king, or a famous hero, but it is a grander thing to be able to say—My Father is Almighty God.

Again, we should be cheerful and happy, because we *having nothing to fear*. We have nothing to fear in the future, if we have repented truly ; we know that the pages of our life's story have been washed free from all stains. We have nothing to

as The Gospel of Cheerfulness.

fear in this present life, because God, our Father, loves us, and takes care of us. The child feels safe if it can hold its father's hand. We are safe if we hold God's Hand. Sorrow, loss, pain; persecution, death, need not frighten us, because we know that underneath are the Everlasting Arms. We may have to meet many sorrows, we may have to learn many hard lessons in God's school, and we may be forced to cry over some of them, but still there is a time to laugh, and we can say, "In the Lord put I my trust, I will not fear what man doeth unto me." We may lose many things and persons dear to us, still we can laugh through our tears, and say, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the Name of the Lord." We need not fear death, because we know it is not the end, but the beginning; we believe in the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting.

Yes, here is the great reason why we should laugh and be happy, we have something good to look forward to, such good things as pass man's understanding. When Israel came out of Egypt, then was their mouth filled with laughter. When we pass out of the Egypt of this poor body, and enter into the glorious kingdom prepared for us, it will be a time to laugh, to sing, to rejoice. If you are Christians you believe that after death you go some-

The Gospel of Cheerfulness. 50

where; you do not believe that you stay in the Churchyard, shut up in a coffin. You believe in the world to come. What sort of life will it be? An eternal sleep? Surely not; God did not create us to live for a few short years, and then to go to sleep for ever. *An eternal idleness*, an eternity of doing nothing? Surely not; God will not have us idle in this world, and He certainly will not have us idle in the next. Besides, no one could be happy with nothing to do. We can do so little here, and we have such a short time to do it in, that we must believe that a much greater work is waiting for us hereafter.

We are only in a preparatory school among the infants here, we shall grow up in the next world. I believe that the future life will be one of growth, of education, of advance, of usefulness. We shall learn to know God as we can never know Him now, and to serve Him as we cannot serve Him here. The least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than the greatest here. The cleverest of us will have to begin very low down on the Heavenly ladder, in a very low class in the Heavenly school. But we shall advance, and go up, step by step. I believe that the future life will be perfectly happy, a condition which we cannot know here. A great divine (Tillotson) says—We cannot understand what future happiness

§ The Gospel of Cheerfulness.

will be, because Almighty God has ten thousand different ways of making us happy. We shall be part of eternity, part of eternal happiness, and the form of happiness will be suited to our needs. What makes one happy here would not delight another ; as there are various kinds of joy here, so will there be, we may believe, in the life to come.

Here we love to meet our friends. When the Roman hero Brutus parts from his friend Cassius he says, "If we should meet again, why then we'll smile." When we feel that we shall meet again our friends, our children, our dear ones, in the Better Land, is it not a time to laugh for joy? We believe that we shall meet the great army of Saints, who rest from their labours, and yet ever work for God. We believe that we shall be among those who have washed their robes in the Blood of the Lamb. Above all, we believe that we shall see Jesus, not as in a glass, darkly, but face to face. Shall we not then be cheerful in doing our work and our duty here for a little while, and ought not our mouth to be filled with laughter when we look forward to the good time coming?


Sermon XXX.

LABOUR AND REST.

(Harvest Festival.)

LEVITICUS XXV. 3, 4.

“Six years thou shalt sow thy field, and six years thou shalt prune thy vineyard, and gather in the fruit thereof; but in the seventh year shall be a Sabbath of rest unto the land, a Sabbath for the Lord.”

 O the ancient Jews, numbers, especially the number seven, had a sacred meaning. In the Bible we find the number seven mentioned over and over again. God created all things in six days, or periods, and rested on the seventh. The Ark rested on the mountains in the seventh month. Most of the Jewish festivals lasted for seven days. Balak prepared seven altars, the High Priest sprinkled the blood of the Atonement seven times. S. John, in his vision, saw seven lamps, which are the seven spirits, and heard the messages of the seven Churches. Seven deacons were chosen to carry on

✠ Labour and Rest.

the work of the Church, and our Lord Jesus Christ spoke seven last words on the Cross.

“Six years thou shalt sow thy field and prune thy vineyard, and gather the fruit thereof, and the seventh year shall be a sabbath of rest unto the land, a sabbath for the Lord.” That is God’s universal law, six days for work, and the seventh day for rest. Six days make the week’s work, and the seventh day is the Sabbath of rest. Man’s life consists of so many years of work, fifty, sixty, seventy, then comes the sabbath, the rest that remaineth for the people of God.

Let us look at our own life in this way, so many years of work, then the sabbath of rest and peace in the Promised Land beyond the river of death. All true work is done for God, in a religious spirit. A man may labour very hard, rise early, and so late take rest, and wear out his body and brain, and yet be an idler in God’s sight. Unless we work in God’s vineyard we stand all the day idle. We may labour very hard for the world, the flesh, and the devil, and yet be idlers. A master expects his servants to work for *him*. Their time is their master’s time. We are all Christ’s servants, signed with the Cross, and our life is not our own, our time is our Master’s time. We have to give an account for every day, and week, and year. One

Labour and Rest. 50

says—I work very hard at my trade, or profession, or business ; but if such an one has not God in all his thoughts, and never prays, or goes to Church, or reads his Bible, or helps his neighbour, he is merely an idler. It is but lost labour that ye rise up early, and so late take rest, and eat the bread of carefulness.

Jesus Christ was a worker on earth, but always in one way, He was about His Heavenly Father's business. So with us, no matter what we are, a labourer, a preacher, a writer, a farmer, a prince, whatever we do, we must do it unto the Lord. We must put our work into our religion, and our religion into our work. We must always remember in Whose image we were created, and we must let nothing destroy the image of Christ in our life.

There was a famous French sculptor who was at work on his masterpiece. He was very poor, and lived in one garret, his only room and workshop. The statue was almost finished in clay, when one night a great frost fell upon the city. The sculptor was in bed, and the statue stood in the midst of the freezing room, and he feared the cold would destroy his precious work. He took, therefore, the bed clothes and wrapped them round the statue, and lay down in the cold, uncovered. In the morning his friends found the sculptor dead, but the image

was unharmed. Brethren, let nothing destroy the ideal of your life, the image of Jesus Christ.

“Six years thou shalt sow thy field.” The field is our life, for so long must we cultivate it, then comes the seventh day, the day of harvest, the day of rest, the day of going home with the sheaves. Life is so many years of opportunity of doing good work for God. There is a famous picture which represents a young man sitting idly by a table loaded with fruit and sweet things. In front of him are many open doors; these are the doors of opportunity. Through one door comes a sturdy man carrying a spade; it is an opportunity of work, but the young man heeds it not. Through another door comes the figure of a scholar with a book; it is an opportunity of learning, but it is unnoticed. Through another door is seen a widow, bowed down with sorrow, who stretches her hands for assistance; it is the opportunity of helping others, but it is uncared for. So our life is full of the open doors of opportunity, of honest work, of valuable knowledge, of loving help to others; if we neglect them, the door is shut, the opportunity is gone. Brethren, if the door is once shut, it can never be opened again.

For six years sow thy field. Sow good seed, lead a good life. Men say of a piece of land—That is a well-kept field. They should be able to say of

Labour and Rest.

us—That is a well-kept life. What shall we sow in our life's field? First, *the seed of usefulness*. Lead a life fit for something. Some of us may well ask—Why was I ever born into the world, what is the use of me? People who make their life a selfish slavery to work, or a selfish play time, whose one thought is to take care of self, never do any good to anyone. They are like a fingerpost with a broken arm, they point nowhere. However humble your life may be, make it a useful life. The man who keeps his doorstep clean does a very little thing, but it is a useful thing, he sets a good example. The man who keeps his talk clean, helps to keep the world clean. Be good for something, be useful. God sent us here to work for Him; He has given us all talents, five, or two, or one, and an account must be given for them; if I have five talents, I must account for five. God gives us good seed, but we must sow it. We must cultivate the little field of our life for six years, or sixty years. The really useful life is always unselfish. The lowliest life lived for God is precious in His sight. If a vessel be pure and clean, it can be consecrated to God's service, whether it be the golden cup of the Altar, or the silver lamp of the sanctuary, or the humble bowl and platter of everyday life. Sow the seed of a good, useful life, and never mind how lowly it is.

❧ Labour and Rest.

For six years thou shalt sow thy field. Sow *seeds of kindness*. Some people go through life sowing good words and kind acts, and make the world a flower garden. Others sow thorns and briars, evil temper and evil words, and make the world a wilderness. The poet says, "How full of thorns and briars is this work-a-day world," but God did not sow them, man's selfish tempers scatter thorn seeds, tares among God's wheat. The little children of the parish often bring me bunches of flowers; it is a small thing, you say. Yes, but it is these small things which make life happy. Some people only give us bunches of thorns. The world had only thorns for the Lord Jesus; let us, for His sake, give flowers of kindness to our fellow-men.

Sow seeds of beauty. You tell me that your life is very common, poor, lowly, but that is no reason why it should not be beautiful. Some of the sweetest flowers grow in the smallest garden. Some of the most beautiful lives I know are lived under cottage thatch in a poor, humble home. A good life is beautiful anywhere, just as a rose is beautiful in a palace or a cellar. The most beautiful thing in the world is a good life, gentle, unselfish, contented, full of trust in God and of help for others, and such a life is within reach of us all. Would you be happy, my brethren? Then forget your-

Labour and Rest. 50

selves, and think of others. There are people all around you needing help, sinking under burdens, darkened by sorrow, help them, cheer them, comfort them. You will not feel your own burden while you are helping another.

“ Lift a little, lift a little,
Many they who need thine aid,
Many lying by the roadside
‘Neath misfortune’s dreary shade.
Pass not by, like priest or levite,
Heedless of thy fellow-man,
But, with heart and arms extended,
Be the good Samaritan.”

Try to make your life good, whatever it is. The philosopher Epictetus says that we are like actors in a theatre, and our duty is to play the part assigned to us as well as possible. We may think the part unsuited to us, or prefer that of another, but it is not our business to choose, but only to play our part. Epictetus himself was only a slave, and so acted a very humble part, but he was a good man, and has left good words behind him.

“ For six years thou shalt prune thy vineyard.” There is a great deal of pruning work in life. The vines in the vineyard never bear much fruit if they are not cut and pruned, so it is with our lives. There is so much dead wood, there are so many fruitless

❧ Labour and Rest.

branches in our life's vineyard. Many of us are very fond of going into a neighbour's vineyard and suggesting improvements, whilst our own vineyard is not well kept. We are always cutting away at our neighbour's faults, and neglecting our own. There is the great danger for us all of seeing others' sins, gaps in other fences, weeds in other gardens, fruitless trees in other vineyards, whilst we forget to look at our own. Brethren, begin at home, prune your own vineyard, cast the beam out of your own eye, weed your own garden, before you blame your neighbour. If you look at a human skull, you think—Is it possible that this was once the face of a handsome man. If we could only see ourselves as we really are we should be forced to say—We who thought ourselves so clever, so good, so superior to other people, what poor creatures we are, but there is no looking-glass to show us our real selves.

Brethren, daily take the key of prayer, and go into the vineyard of your life, and examine yourselves; prune away the fruitless branches, the dead limbs, overgrown with bad habits, the branches full of leaves of profession, but without fruit; never mind if the pruning knife cuts deeply, it is better to suffer than to live and die fruitless.

“In the seventh year there shall be a sabbath of

Labour and Rest. 50

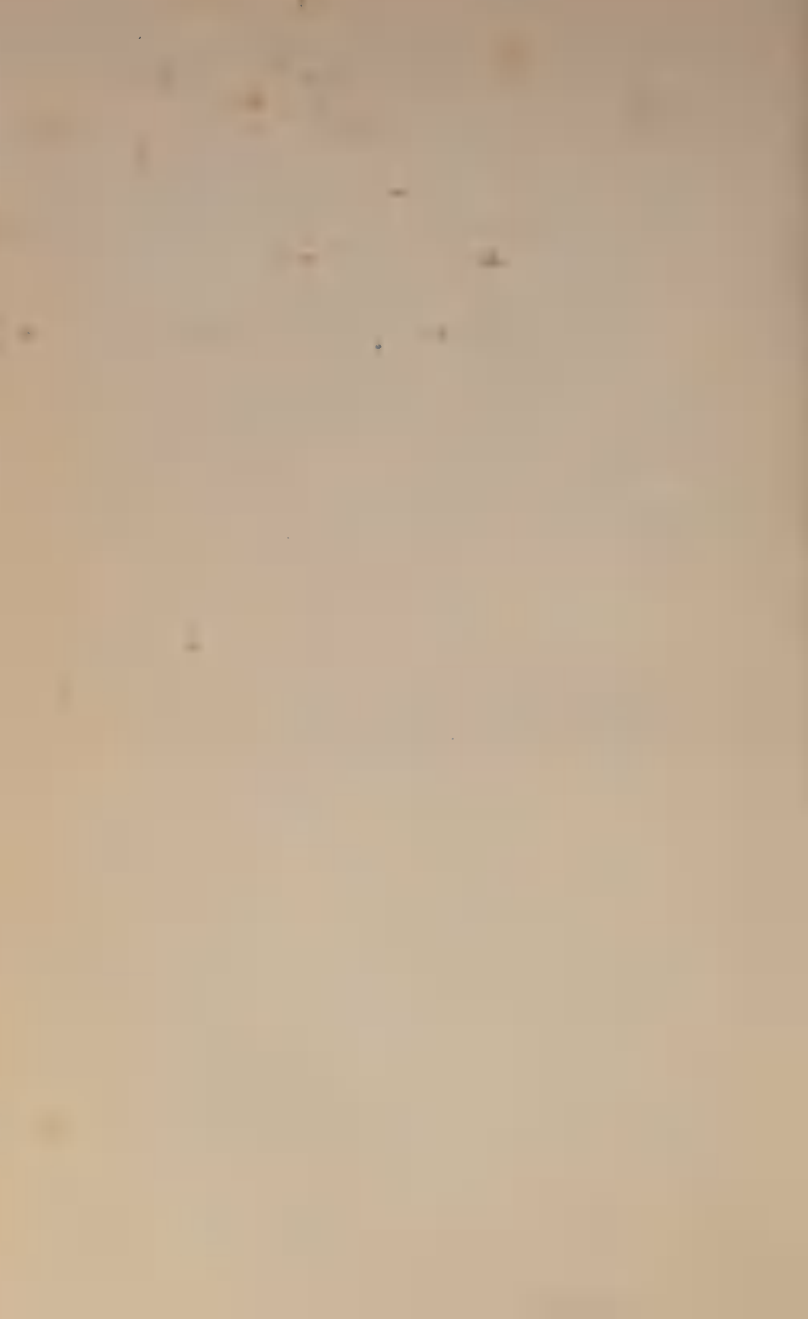
rest unto the land, a sabbath for the Lord." Yes, that is God's great law, the week of labour, the sabbath of rest, the day of labour, the night of sleep, the life of work, the sabbath of eternal rest. When our day's work is over we shall go home, home to the sabbath of the Lord, not to idleness, but to that rest and peace which the world cannot give. When the weary limbs ache no more under the burden, and the sad hearts sink not under sorrow; when old age and weakness no more cripple our efforts, it will be the sabbath of the Lord, the year of Jubilee, the year of victory, when the workers go home rejoicing, when the servants meet the Master, and their great reward, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord; even so, saith the Spirit, for they rest from their labours."

THE END.

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